THE SILENT VOICE,

AND OTHER DISCOURSES.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE POETS' BIBLE. 2 Vols.

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THE SILENT VOICE

AND OTHER DISCOURSES

BY

W. GARRETT HORDER

"Let us be men with men, but always children before God: for in His eyes we are but children."—JOUBERT

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"God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge
To pick out treasures from an earthern pot.
The worst speak something good; if all want sense,
God takes a text, and preacheth patience."

GEORGE HERBERT.

THESE discourses are published in response to a request from many friends, whose wishes have very largely determined the selection. In this respect hearers are in a better position to judge than the preacher; but for such expressed wishes the volume would probably have consisted *only* of practical discourses, of which, as it is, it chiefly consists. I hold that the feelings kindled by religious influences need to be guided into right channels, and that if this be not done, the results on the life are usually very poor. In the New Testament, doctrine ever leads up to practice, theology to ethics; and the piety of the Church at large would have been of a much less sentimental and of a far more robust type had this procedure been closely followed.

It is only necessary to add that, since these discourses were delivered I have here and there inserted illustrative extracts which confirmed, or set in better language than I have at my command, some of the truths enforced. I shall be thankful if this little book should serve to confirm faith, to dispel difficulty, or guide conduct.

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"I know ye nothing care for me
Each to each deep mysteries,
We cannot guess what we may be
Except by what a glance can seize.
Perchance we never met before,
Meet now the first and final time
Yet are ye mine, over and o'er,
That haply I may help you climb
To Jesus, up the mount divine.
Oh! might such high success be mine
Fain would I couch your vision dim!
Fain would I lead you up to Him"

From "A Preacher's Soliloquy," by HENRY SEPTIMUS SUTTON.

THE SILENT VOICE.

"Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language;
Their voice cannot be heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world."
PSALM xix. 2-4 (Revised Version).

THE first part of this psalm furnishes a key to the spiritual significance of nature. The psalm unlocks no scientific secret. That is not its object; it is indeed unscientific, for it grows out of the imperfect physical knowledge of that far-off age in which men thought of the earth as *stationary*, and of the sun as *moving* from east to west. But scientifically inaccurate, it is spiritually accurate; physically misleading, it is morally revealing. Though we have outgrown its conception of the facts, we have not, and never shall, outgrow its conception of their spiritual significance. We know now that the sun does not move, like a giant, from one end of the heavens to the other, but in relative immobility stands as the centre of its system; but none the less the heavens declare the glory of God, day uttering speech, and night revealing knowledge. The heavens are looked at in a new light, but they still quicken the old faith. But the words before us are suggestive of the Divine method of teaching, and the suggestion is conveyed, as so often in Scripture, by an apparent contradiction. The apparent contradiction is here; in the

second and fourth verses we are told that "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world;" but in the third verse we are told, "There is no speech nor language; their voice cannot be heard."

The heavens utter speech, and yet they are silent; they reveal knowledge, and yet their voices are not heard! An utter contradiction, you say. Yes; but it could not have been a contradiction to the Psalmist, for both conceptions are at the same moment in his mind, and find expression from his lips in the same breath. It is true, men often contradict themselves. One statement may be set against another from the same speaker; the thoughts of one mood may be opposed to those of another. But, unless they are very foolish, men do not *in the same breath* contradict themselves. What seems like a contradiction to the hearer is from the standpoint of the speaker only harmony. A great orchestra may to the listener at one point seem to give forth only discord, but from another point its music may be perfectly harmonious. There is a way of regarding this passage so that it seems a gross contradiction, but regarded from the Psalmist's point the seeming contradiction sets forth in the clearest way the noblest truth. The heavens *are* silent—neither sun nor moon nor stars *speak*. The music of the spheres, of which in the early times Pythagoras spoke, is but a poetic figure. And yet in another sense the heavens are eloquent beyond all speech. There is an eloquence of the eye as well as of the voice. The greatest teachers of the world are often silent ones. The portrait may be dumb, and yet the canvas be eloquent. You stand before it and exclaim, "What a speaking likeness!" The sculptor's calm, cold marble is the very image of silence, and yet it sometimes speaks

more powerfully than the orator's lip. Before the child can speak its tiny face is full of meaning to its mother's eye. No word may have passed between youth and maiden, and yet more than words could express has shone out of their love-filled eyes, or thrilled through the grasp of each other's hands. In this sense speech is but silvern, whilst silence is golden. The two mightiest voices Emmanuel Kant ever heard were both silent ones—"the starry heavens above, the moral law within." In our wordy age this eloquence of silence is often overlooked, but none the less is it true that where neither speech nor language is heard the revelation is often the clearest.

"There are sounds, like flakes of snow falling
In their silent and eddying rings:
We tremble, they touch us so lightly,
Like the feathers from angel's wings.

There are pauses of marvellous silence
That are full of significant sound,
Like music echoing music
Under water or under ground."

We are often compelled to say, as did Sheridan Knowles—

"I hear a voice so fine
That nothing lives 'twixt it and silence."

Now, here is to be found the clue to the Divine method. We will consider it a little more in detail.

I. *This is God's method in nature.* Nature has neither speech nor language; her voices are not heard. Sun, moon, and stars, mountain and valley, flower and tree, alike are silent. The ocean may roar, the wind may sigh, the birds may sing, but they have no *articulate* voice—no key has ever been found to their language; it has never been translated into any human equivalent. Nature never puts her meaning into words of any language, and yet

her sound has gone forth through all lands, and her words to the end of the world.

> "There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st,
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim."

And everywhere men have heard, and in greater or less degree have felt, her meaning. The old rendering of the third verse of this psalm, though it does not represent the original, is yet true in fact—"There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard"—heard so clearly that in almost every land men have been drawn to the worship of nature. To the Persian, the sun spoke so clearly that he made it the object of his adoration; to the Greek, earth and ocean, sun and moon, seemed alive with Divine presences; to the ancient Druids, the heavenly bodies spoke so clearly that in their rude stone temples at Avebury and Stonehenge, open as they were to the sky, they worshipped the orbs of heaven. To many a savage, earth has been so eloquent that he invested it with a Divine significance, and offered it, in his rude way, Divine honours. To Wordsworth the voices of nature were as clear as if angels sang above his head. In "A Voluntary, composed upon an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty," he says—

> "Time was when field and watery cove
> With modulated echoes rang,
> While choirs of fervent angels sang
> Their vespers in the grove;
> Or, crowning, starlike, each some sovereign height,
> Warbled for heaven above and earth below,
> Strains suitable for both.—Such holy rite,
> Methinks, if audibly repeated now
> From hill or valley, could not move
> Sublimer transport, purer love,
> Than doth this silent spectacle—the gleam—
> The shadow—and the peace supreme."

Whilst in his wonderful "Lines on Tintern Abbey" he speaks of—

> "that blessed mood
> In which the affections gently lead us on,
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul;
> While, with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

Mrs. Barrett Browning, in her striking poem on "A Child's Thought of God," says—

> "God is so good, He wears a fold
> Of heaven and earth across His face—
> Like secrets kept, for love, untold;
> But still I feel that His embrace
> Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
> Through sight and sound of every place.
> As if my tender mother laid
> On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
> Half-waking me at night, and said,
> 'Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?'"

And Aubrey de Vere speaks of—

> "Some presence veiled, in fields and groves,
> That mingles rapture with remorse;
> Some buried joy beside us moves,
> And thrills the soul with sweet discourse.
>
> "As they, perchance, that wondering pair
> Who to Emmaus bent their way,
> Hearing, heard not; like them our prayer
> We make—'The night is near us. . . . Stay!'"

Victor Hugo nobly says—

> "We are but night;
> God is the only light the world can need:
> Atoms and space are in this text agreed.
> God only great the humble flow'rets name,
> And only true the mighty floods proclaim,

And only good winds tell from spot to spot.
O man, let idle vaunts deceive you not!
Whence did you spring, to think that you can be
Better than God, who made the stars and sea,
And who awakes you, when your rest is done,
With His prodigious smile of love—the sun?"

And a recent poet only gives voice to the feeling of many hearts when she says—

"Sometimes, as in the summer fields
I walk abroad, there comes to me
So wild a sense of mystery,
My senses reel, my reason fails;
I am in such strange company.

"Yet somewhere, dimly, I can feel
The wild confusion dwells in me,
And I, in no strange company,
Am the lost link 'twixt Him and these,
And touch Him through the mystery."

Some friends of mine on one occasion came suddenly on a scene of surpassing glory, high among the mountains in Switzerland, and stood holding each other's hands, awed into worship, feeling, "Surely the Lord is in this place!" Thus Nature, silent though she be, yet speaks; though no words are heard, her meaning is clearly discerned. It is no refutation of all this to say, '*I* do not hear her voice, or discern her meaning.' You are musical, it may be, and whilst listening to a noble orchestra, one in your company says, "This to me is meaningless, only a confused Babel of sound." Does that convince you that the music which holds you captive is but a delusion? You are artistic, it may be, and standing before a great picture, you hear a beholder exclaim, "What a lovely frame!" (as once I did). Does that convince you that the frame is more than the picture? You are mechanical, it may be, and looking on a wondrous piece of mechanism, you notice one who, with no such aptitude, turns listlessly

away. Are you convinced that the mechanic has toiled in vain? And will you dare to say of Nature, "She has no voice that *I* can hear, no meaning that *I* can discern; to me she is only a dwelling-place for man; what seems a voice and meaning is only an illusion; those who say they hear a voice or discern a meaning are self-deceived"? Would it not be wiser, humbler, truer, to say, "The fault is mine; my hearing is not keen enough to hear the voice; my sight is not cleared to discern the meaning"?

> "If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness,
> And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;
> There towers the mountain of the voice no less,
> Which whoso seeks shall find; but he who bends
> Intent on manna still, and mortal ends,
> Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore."

If Nature has drawn men in every land to worship, if she has moved the hearts of some of the noblest of the race to rapture, then, silent though she be, she surely speaks, and though she utter no word, her meaning is real.

It is a vain conceit of a literary age to fancy that meanings can be conveyed only by *words*, or that truth can be revealed only by *books*. The deepest things are *felt*, not heard; the noblest truths reach us by a voice that is both *still* and *small*. And if Nature is ever to be to us what it was to the Psalmist and the noblest of every land, we must not be content to understand her mere alphabet by manuals of geology, or botany, or physics, but by opening our *hearts* to her deeper revelations, and regarding with deepest adoration the mysteries she contains.

Well does Emerson say, "God Himself does not speak prose, but communicates with us by hints, omens, inferences, and dark resemblances in objects lying all around us."

"Heart, heart, awake! the love that loveth all
Maketh a deeper calm than Horeb's cave,
Where in her temple, earth o'erarched with sky
God's heart to mine may speak, my heart reply.

II. *This is God's method in man.* I have already reminded you that the greatest philosopher of modern times was most deeply impressed by the starry heavens above and the moral law within. And of the moral law, as of the starry heavens, it may be said, "It has neither speech nor language; its voice is not heard." Conscience is as silent as the eternal heavens; it never reaches to *articulate* expression. Sometimes, it is true, it is so aroused that it clothes its commands in words, and, as we lean to the evil, cries with majestic voice, "Thou shalt not!" or, as we shrink back from the good, with tones of entreaty declares, "This do, and thou shalt live!" But the words are only a human clothing of a Divine reality; just as Luther, in the castle of the Wartburg, tempted of evil, in imagination unconsciously clothed it with bodily form, and threw at it the ink-horn with which he was writing. No bodily form was there which his ink-horn could mark or wound; intercepted by no Satanic body, it only reached and left its stain upon the castle wall. And conscience is too *spiritual* to speak in words; it is a *spirit* bearing witness within our *spirit*, moving upon and directing the troubled waters of the soul. Its realm is *feeling* and awakened *thought;* it is a *force*, not a *voice;* it is a *constraint*, not a *revelation.*

"Yet high above the limits of my seeing,
And folded far within the inmost heart,
And deep below the deeps of conscious being,
Thy splendour shineth; there, O God, Thou art."

And therefore our wisdom is not so much to listen or consider as to yield—to be responsive to this Divine in-

fluence. We may not be able to formulate the influence to others; to set it out in words, or reduce it to writing; thus translated it may look foolish, as the feeling of love often does when treated thus. Love is too sacred, too subtle, to bear such expression, but none the less it is the mightiest force in the universe, and the deepest in the heart of the Most High. The more readily we yield the mightier will be this spiritual influence, the more we shall be possessed thereby, until all opposition shall at length cease, and there shall be no discord between the host and the guest. And at last the Apostle's high condition will be reached, "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me."

III. *This is God's method in revelation.* Of the Divine revelation it may be said, God has neither speech nor language; His voice is not heard. God's voice, as that of Nature, is a silent one; it is not heard with the ear, but felt in the heart, an altogether higher and nobler realm for the Divine. Indeed, the Prophet Jeremiah expressly says, "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it." But you say, "Does not Scripture often come to us with the declaration, 'Thus saith the Lord'?" Assuredly it does; but it does not follow that the saying was to the *ears* of men. Elijah was most deeply moved, not by the fire, or the earthquake, or the wind, but by "the *still*, small voice," which is surely only another way of describing a silence which might be felt, felt all the more keenly after the mighty sounds which preceded. When Judas asked, "How is it that thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" this was the answer of our Lord: "If a man *love* Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will *come* unto him, and *make our abode*

with him." No assurance is here of any audible voice. It is by presence, not by speech, He will be revealed. A distinguished Rabbinical scholar once told me that it was his conviction that all communications from Jehovah to Israel were to the *heart* rather than to the *ear;* whilst the Jews say that His will was revealed to their elders, after the times of the prophets, not by any articulate words, but by some secret inward inspiration, which they call Bath-kol, *i.e.* the daughter of the voice—the voice of a voice, an echo within the soul. An impression on the heart is a finer mode of communication than a sound falling on the outward ear. If the preacher could carry the impression of truth into the heart, he would gladly be silent with his voice. The ear is but the porch of the temple; the heart is the temple itself. Which is the nobler, the messenger who delivers his message at the door, or the friend who enters, and holds fellowship within the house? Count Zindendorf once stood before a picture of Christ on the cross, underneath which was written, "I did all this for thee; what hast thou done for Me?" No voice fell on his ear, but a great emotion passed over his heart, and led him to yield himself to one crucified for him. It is a poor conception of Scripture to think of its messages as conveyed to the outer ear of the writers. It is a far nobler one to regard them as impressions made within the heart. The writers were not mere reporters, but exponents of thoughts quickened within their hearts. And this is evident from two considerations: *first, from the express declaration of Scripture.* We are told, "Holy men of old spake as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost;" *moved,* not spoken to, moved by the Holy Ghost, who never speaks by audible voice, a "Spirit that beareth witness with our spirits" that we are the children of God, "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall *lead* you into all truth." Scripture gains a new glory when we regard it as an impression made within the heart rather than of a voice speaking in Hebrew or Greek from the sky. *Whilst the second consideration is, that every book of Scripture bears on its face the idiosyncrasy of the writer.* If to the outer ear, and in human speech, God had spoken, the book would have been all alike; it would have been marked by uniformity rather than variety. But springing as it does from impressions within the nature, it is distinguished by the characteristics of the men who put those impressions into language. Isaiah and Ezekiel, Paul and John, Luke and James, all alike are moved by a Divine Spirit, but it finds voice in the special style and language of each. And the great task in relation to Scripture is to separate between the human personality of the speaker and the Divine impression made upon his mind, to pass through the earthly court, so as to behold the Divine glory in the Holy of holies.

IV. *This method to some extent prevails in relation to Jesus Christ Himself.* He is the clearest voice of God which men could bear, His words the fullest embodiment of the Divine thought possible in human language. His words are spirit and life; but all of Christ is not to be found in His words.

> "Christ is the Beautiful, Eternal Word,
> *Breathed* from God's heart into this world of ours."

There were many things He could not say, because men could not bear them. Hence, He is greater than His words, great as those words are; nay, He lifts Himself above His words, and cries, "I am the Light of the world: he that *followeth Me* shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." When Christ is silent He speaks;

when His words do not reach the ear He yet teaches. Well did Victor Hugo write at the foot of a crucifix—

> "Come to this God, ye weepers, for He weeps;
> Come to Him, ye who suffer, for He cures;
> Come to Him, ye who fear, He pity keeps;
> Come to Him, ye who pass, for He endures."

Thus in most realms the Divine method is neither by speech nor language, and yet it is a method which carries the sound into all lands, and the words unto the end of the world. God has not given to men a code of Divine instructions, or a philosophy of life to be mastered as a lesson. He has rather reflected Himself in Nature, in the Human Conscience, in Scripture, in His Son Jesus Christ. And therefore our part is not just to master the record as we should a lesson in school, but to yield our natures to these gracious influences, to be receptive, to be plastic under them. The Divinest lessons cannot be learnt by mere intellectual effort, but only by quiet pondering. Nature will never bear her witness save to hearts that love her. The Spirit will not fashion us anew save as we yield to His influence; Scripture will not minister save to those whose hearts are yearning for God; Christ will not deliver us from darkness save as we follow His light-giving footsteps. But alas! alas! in these days many of us are in too much haste for all this.

> "The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

"Yes, we are too busy, too encumbered, too much occupied, too active! We read too much! The one thing needful is to throw off all one's load of cares, of preoccupations, of pedantry, and to become again young,

simple, child-like, living happily and gratefully in the present hour. We must know how to put occupation aside, which does not mean that we must be idle. In an inaction which is meditative and attentive the wrinkles of the soul are smoothed away, and the soul itself spreads, unfolds, and springs afresh, and, like the trodden grass of the road-side or the bruised leaf of a plant, repairs its injuries, becomes new, spontaneous, true, and original. Reverie, like the rain of night, restores colour and force to thoughts which have been blanched and wearied by the heat of the day. With gentle fertilising power it awakens within us a thousand sleeping germs, and as though in play, gathers round us materials for the future, and images for the use of talent. *Reverie is the Sunday of thought;* and who knows which is the more important and fruitful for man, the laborious tension of the week, or the life-giving repose of the Sabbath ?" *

In quietness and confidence alone can we find our strength. It is only as we come apart and rest awhile that the Divinest lessons will reach our hearts and mould our lives.

* "Journal Intime of Henri-Frédéric Amiel," pp. 23, 24.

THE FAINTING HEART.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."—PSALM xxvii. 13.

THERE are many in our day who are fainting because they cannot "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." A vast number of voices are heard asking, "Who will show us any good?" Pessimism—the creed of despair—throws its dark shadow over thousands both in Germany and England. Its wail is heard through much of our popular literature. The light and glow which once filled life with glory have, from many a heart, quite departed. The more sympathetic we become the more are we disposed to ask, "Why is suffering permitted in the world?" The callous move on unconcerned; but the tender feel for the woes of their fellows. And their very feeling often awakens the cry, "Why hast Thou made us thus?"

Now, it should be noted first—*that whilst the misery of the world is great, it is not so great as it sometimes seems.* I admit frankly and freely that, look where we will, the shadows are broad and deep. Wherever there is conscious life there is heard, at some point or other, the note of suffering. In the animal world the prevailing order is that the strong and great prey upon the weak and small. One race lives upon another and lower one. It is thus among the insects which people the air, the fishes that

swim the sea, the birds that fill the forests, the beasts that roam the earth. The Poet Laureate speaks of—

> "Nature red in tooth and claw
> With ravine."

Over the whole animal world man reigns, and, with unrelenting hand, wields the great destructive forces which his higher intellect and knowledge put at his service. It is so, though in less degree, in the human realm. The higher races tyrannise over the lower. Before the white man's presence many an aboriginal race has utterly perished; whilst among men at large there are miseries which neither civilisation, nor culture, nor science, nor even Christianity, nor all of them together, have as yet been able to banish. Poverty is widespread and keenly felt, probably *more* keenly felt, in England than in savage lands. Suffering invades the homes of the wealthy and the poor alike. Bereavement wrings the heart of peer and pauper, whilst over all the dark shadow of death hangs with threatening and awful form.* Again and again the great forces of Nature, which to a large extent man bends to his will, break forth in their irresistible might and overwhelm him in ruin. The earthquake gulphs men by thousands in sudden overthrow. The storm sweeps over a land, carrying death in its train. The sea

* As in the present discourse I do not deal with the problem of death, I may perhaps be permitted to say that, constituted as the world and man at present are, the abolition of death, greatly to be desired as at first sight it seems, would be a very questionable boon. One has only to think of the world without death—of all the generations of the past still living on—the "early world's grey fathers" still moving amongst us (as Dean Swift in his "Gulliver's Travels" has pictured)—to feel that death is a factor necessary to the happiness and progress of humanity, whilst, beyond this, it is essential in order that man may be ushered into that higher class of the great school of life which is now hidden from us behind the veil.

rises up in her might, and whelms the vessel and all on board beneath her waves. Pestilence stalks forth in subtle and invisible might, and strikes down her victims by thousands. War has made many a fair field red with blood. I do not wonder that many a one who has pondered these things has felt the ground of faith trembling beneath his feet, and, in the agony of his troubled thought, has cried, 'Is there in the heavens a God of love, a Father of men?'

But, great and awful as are the things of which I have spoken, it is very easy to exaggerate their significance. There are those who speak as if cruelty or indifference to suffering were the law of the universe, as if anguish and agony were written across the face of the earth. It is not thus. Anguish, suffering, sorrow are *not* the prevailing notes in the music of earth. They are rather like minor chords which throw into grander relief the full and jubilant notes of the music.

> "Never was day so over-sick with showers
> But that it had some intermitting hours;
> Never was night so tedious but it knew
> The last watch out, and saw the dawning too;
> Never was dungeon so obscurely deep
> Wherein or light or day did never peep;
> Never did moon so ebb or seas so wane
> But they left hope seed to fill up again.*

This is true of each of the realms to which I have referred. A very large part of the animal life of the world, it is true, falls a prey to creatures of greater strength, or to man—the lord of creation. But, in spite of this, happiness is the law of the animal world. Indeed, it furnishes us with some of the noblest pictures of contented enjoyment. The hum of insects in the summer air is but their cry of joy. The birds, though exposed

* R. Herrick, "Hesperides."

to the chilling frost of winter or the gun of the sportsman, sing among the branches. As I was writing this discourse my eye lighted on a robin hopping about on a fruit-tree opposite my study window, and a more perfect picture of happiness it would be difficult to conceive. The fishes coursing through the waters may at any moment be devoured by larger members of their own tribe, or be drawn out of their element by net or line; but if sportive motion can express pleasure, this is surely their portion. The beasts which form the prey of the carnivorous animals do not seem to live in constant dread of the blow that will lay them low. They sport in prairie or jungle, or on the plain, happy as the days are long.* And it is thus in the human realm. To hear some men talk you would think that there was nothing to be heard but "the low, sad music of humanity." That may, indeed, be heard, sad with an inexpressible sadness; but the music has its *hallelujahs* as well as its *misereres*. Humanity has its joys as well as its sorrows, its pleasures as well as its pains. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." There *are* the weeping with whom we may weep, but there *are*, also, the rejoicing with whom we may rejoice. Calamities are the exception and not the rule. Earthquakes are not *always* upheaving the earth; storms are not *always*

* Since this sermon was delivered I have been glad to notice that its main positions have been fully confirmed by the distinguished naturalist Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace. In his recent book "Darwinism" there is a striking passage on "The Ethical Aspect of the Struggle for Existence," chap. ii., pp. 36-40, the whole of which should be pondered by all inclined to Pessimistic thought concerning the universe. Space will only permit the quotation of its closing sentences:—

"On the whole, then, we conclude that the popular idea of the struggle for existence entailing misery and pain on the animal world is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about is the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life, with the minimum of suffering and

raging on the ocean; pestilence is not *always* stalking abroad. But, unfortunately, we note these all too carefully, and overlook, or take for granted, the quietness and stability of the earth, the calm of the sea, the health of the peoples. We cry, "God be pitiful!" and fail to cry, "God be praised!" The fact is, the pervading, the constant element in Nature and life is the gracious, the merciful; the exceptional is the painful, the troublous. Look at your own lives, and say whether it is not so. How few, comparatively, are the days in which you have been racked by pain, or desolated by sorrow, or burdened with anxieties! The times in which it has been so with you are remembered and even recorded; but the times in which the stream of your life flowed peacefully, quietly, even joyously on are unrecorded and almost forgotten. The cry of Jacob, "Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage," is neither a true nor an appreciative one, for his days were not few, nor, so far as God was concerned with them, were they evil. And the modern representative of Jacob, the Pessimist who cries, "Who will show us any good?" who declares, as Schopenhauer does, "The end of human existence is suffering," "Accustom yourself to consider this world as a penal colony," "A man should not address his neighbour as Sir! but as my Fellow-sufferer," is not fair in his observation of life; and out of his false and

pain. Given the necessity of death and reproduction,—and without these there could have been no progressive development of the organic world,—and it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured. And this view was evidently that of Darwin himself, who thus concludes his chapter on the struggle for existence:—

"'When we reflect on this struggle we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply."

one-sided view there grow the gloomy and unthankful thoughts which shadow his life.

Then, too, it must be remembered *that much of the misery upon which we look is not so great to those who have to bear it as it appears to us.* I do not wish, in the least, to understate such misery, so that we should be content to let it remain. God forbid! But, at the same time, that misery can only be rightly estimated from the standpoint of those who have to bear it. We go into the homes of poverty and distress; we see their bareness of furniture, their lack of comfort and refinement—no pictures adorn the wall, no objects of beauty meet the eye, no books offer their pages to instruct or to charm the mind. The very necessities of life are scarcely to be found there. And our hearts ache at the sight. It seems scarcely right to go home and enjoy its comforts and refinement whilst others have them not. To *us* life seems scarcely worth living without these. Why? Because for years, probably always, we have been used to them. But then, it must be remembered that, save in the case of those who have dropped down from higher ranks of life, the poor have not been used to these things. They were born into the order amidst which they are found. They are used to it, and use is second nature; so that even amidst their hard and unlovely surroundings they are comparatively happy. I dare say those above *us* in rank, as they look at our life, as they see the narrow limits of our houses, their inferior style of adornment, the absence of luxuries to which *they* are accustomed, would be disposed to pity us, and think ours a very unenviable lot. But their pity would be wasted, for we are accustomed to such a lot. We do not feel the lack which they discern.* Indeed, I question very

* The substance of this discourse was delivered as an address to

much whether there is not quite as much real happiness among the middle as among the upper classes of society. I should be disposed to say that because work is imperative on us, there is probably more. We must never forget that there are wondrous powers of adaptation to circumstances in human, and, for the matter of that, in all living natures.* Animals suit themselves to the countries and climates to which they may be taken. Take a sheep to a warm country like India, and its coat will grow less woolly and more like hair in its texture. Take it to a cold climate, and it will grow more woolly than it is in this one. And that is but a visible sign of how life adapts itself and gets used to its surroundings. As Byron well says—

"Life will suit
Itself to sorrow's most detested fruit."

This always seems to me a capacity of our nature full of benign intent on the part of Him who constituted it, since it constantly tends to the alleviation of suffering and the production of content, and, sometimes, even of happiness, under what at first were unfavouring conditions. Upon this alone no mean argument for the goodness of the Creator might be built up.

a guild at the East End of London, in which all classes, from that of labourers to University graduates, were represented. A free discussion followed, in the course of which a bricklayer told the following story: Some time before, in the depth of winter, whilst at work on a building, he had noticed a little fellow running about with neither stockings nor boots on his feet. He thought how he must be suffering from the cold, and resolved to buy him a pair of boots. He got into conversation however, with the boy, and found, to his astonishment, that his feet, naked though they were, were quite warm—warmer, indeed, than his own, though covered with both stockings and boots!

* For striking examples of how animals suit themselves to their surroundings, see "The Colours of Animals," by E. B. Poulton, M.A., F.R.S., and "Darwinism," by A. R. Wallace.

And, therefore, to get a right idea of the condition of even the poorest, we must look at it from their place, and, as it were, out of their eyes. The Low-German poet Klaus Groth truly says—

"Thou must not
Condemn as worthless what thou dost not know.
For every station has a world its own,
And each one's life is moulded to its form.
Survey it from without, and all within
Looks cold and lifeless to thine eye, although
Within the life is throbbing as before.
And each has got his share of grief and joy,
For empty through the world no heart may go.

"The peasant, too, has got his little world—
He that would see it must have eyes to see—
And has it then grown sadder than of old?
Let him but take a closer, surer look;
And if within himself be found a heart,
Then he will see this world is still as true,
As happy, and as homely, and as gay
As all the fairest tales that e'er were told." *

This is no argument for leaving them as they are. It is our bounden duty to do all we can to improve the condition of the poor, since amid more favourable surroundings their life will grow to greater beauty and glory.† All that it

* Cf. "The Poets and Peoples of Foreign Lands," by J. W. Crombie.

† Speaking of this class, Professor Alfred Marshall says: "Their life is not necessarily unhealthy or unhappy. Rejoicing in their affections toward God and man, and perhaps even possessing some natural refinement of feeling, they may lead lives that are far less incomplete than those of many who have more material wealth. But for all that, their poverty is a great and almost unmixed evil to them. Even when they are well their weariness often amounts to pain, while their pleasures are few; and when sickness comes, the suffering caused by poverty increases tenfold. And though a contented spirit may go far towards reconciling them to these evils, there are others to which it ought not to reconcile them. Overworked and undertaught, weary and careworn, without quiet and without leisure, they have no chance of making the best of their faculties."—"Principles of Economics," Book I., chap. i., p. 2.

should do is to keep our hearts from breaking at the sight of distress and poverty, for thus we may be so saddened as to lose heart and hope, and so give up the endeavour to alleviate poverty and to uplift the poor.

Nor should it be forgotten, as we regard the sorrow of the world, *that there could scarcely be the capacity for joy unless there were also the capacity for sorrow.* I am disposed to think that, conditioned as we are here, a sorrowless would be a joyless world. If there be joy in possession there *must be* sorrow at loss. It is for things we hold most dear that our sorrow at their loss is most acute. Where the light is strongest the shadows are deepest. The natures most capable of mirth are most capable of pathos. That prince of mirth Thomas Hood is also as great a prince of pathos. From the same mind we have the "Whims and Oddities" and "The Song of the Shirt," and those incomparable lines, "We watched her breathing through the night." Indeed, in one of his poems he says—

> "There's not a string attuned to mirth
> But has its chord in melancholy."

So far as this world is concerned the loss of the power to weep would not be an unmixed gain, for we should probably lose at the same time the power to laugh. The idiot may look with unmoved nature on the saddest sight; but then he will be also unmoved by the gladdest of earth's scenes. The eyes that beam with joy are those that overflow with tears. The heart that thrills with gladness is the very heart that may be broken with grief. The land that has the loftiest and grandest mountains has, of necessity, the deepest and darkest valleys. I would rather journey through a country in which I must climb the loftiest hills, even though I may have to descend into the deep valleys that lie between, than journey through

a monotonous level country like Holland. Sorrow, which, of course, springs out of the capacity for sorrow, is a sign rather of the goodness than the indifference of Him who constituted our nature.

> "This truth came borne with bier and pall;
> I felt it when I sorrowed most:
> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all."

When we think hard thoughts of God, because of the sorrow that shadows the world, we surely charge God foolishly.

Nor must we forget that *much, very much, of the misery of the world is not in any real sense chargeable upon God at all.* It lies at the door of *man*, not of *God.* If from the misery of the world be deducted all that springs out of the folly or sin of man, the mountain becomes almost as a mole-hill—*e.g.*, much of human misery is due to the diseases which darken and give anguish to so many lives. But disease is not in the original constitution of humanity. God made man perfect, not diseased. Disease, all disease, I believe, springs directly or indirectly out of the carelessness, or folly, or sin of man. Vice is its chief parent. Any candid physician will tell you that to it can be traced, actually traced, fully half the maladies he has to treat. Violation of the moral law of God gives rise to most of the baneful and worst diseases of humanity. One of the greatest surgeons of the day has affirmed that he can trace in the formation of the teeth of little children the results of vice in their ancestry three or four generations back. Is it right to charge such results on the all-wise and all-loving Father-God? A sinless world would, I believe, be a world of perfect health. Or take the epidemics which from time to time ravage whole districts. Whence do they come? From heaven? Assuredly not.

From filth or folly. Whence came the cholera that raged last autumn in Toulon, Marseilles, and many a fair city of Southern France? From the open and filthy drains of the great arsenal of the French people. Whence came the last attack of that foul disease in England? From sewage filtering into the water supply of one great portion of the East of London. That this was its cause is clear from the fact that the disease did not extend beyond the district supplied by the water thus contaminated. In the year 1849 the city of Salisbury was ravaged by the same disease. Whence did it come? From the open channels in the street, into which the drainage ran, so that the city was called the English Venice. That visitation brought about a sanitary revolution, and cholera has since been quite unknown there. It is commonly believed that certain diseases, such as measles, are inevitable to children. Never was there a greater mistake. Not long ago a distinguished physician showed that there were many races among which these are quite unknown—that there was a time even in England when they did not prevail. Where they now prevail among uncivilised peoples they have been imported by civilised settlers. These are not, as they used to be called, visitations of God; they are rather the outcome of human folly. They spring from infringement of Divine laws. They are penalties of such infringements, intended to force us to obey the laws of purity.

Or take the calamities which arise from the outburst of the great forces of Nature—the earthquakes which desolate great tracks of country and whelm great masses of the dwellers in ruin. These, you say, are *not* due to human or preventable causes. True; but two things must be borne in mind. The first is that they are confined to certain districts which are few and far between. The

whole earth is not volcanic. There is plenty of space in the world for men to dwell where they would be quite safe from such overthow of property and person. A great earthquake is surely like a voice from heaven saying to the inhabitants, "Depart hence." But men will not depart. They cling to the old spots. Not long ago Camicciola, in the Bay of Naples, was well-nigh destroyed by earthquake. We should have thought that henceforth the place would have been avoided as too dangerous for human habitation; but the overthrown buildings have been restored, and are again inhabited. Vesuvius has time after time belched forth its lava and ashes and destroyed the dwellings within a radius of many miles; and yet not only around the mountain, but even creeping up its sides, are still villages crowded with dwellers. If in these places earthquake shocks should again be felt, or over them a lava stream should flow, is it fair to charge their destruction upon the Most High? You might as well charge upon Him the death of the foolhardy skater who ventures upon thin and yielding ice.

Or turn to the sea, from which there is constantly coming stories of vessels and men whelmed in its waters. Are these to be charged upon the Great Father? How many of them are due to badly built, or overladen, or undermanned vessels! How many are due to the fact that vessels are sent to sea when every weather warning says that storms are imminent! How many are due to the fact that the vessels are of too slight a build to stand the stress of storm and wave! Owners could be named whose record shows that they have rarely, if ever, lost either a vessel or a crew.* If cupidity and carelessness could be got rid of, the annals of the sea would not be

* It is the boast of the Cunard Company that they have never lost a passenger.

stained by the awful loss of life with which at present they are.

Or take the existence of poverty in the world. Men talk as if this were due to the insufficiency of the Divine supplies; as if the earth did not bring forth in sufficient abundance to meet man's needs; as if there were not space enough for men on the earth; as if God gave as with a niggard hand; whereas the fact is that God "giveth unto all men liberally;" there is bread enough and to spare. The earth is the witness to the munificence of God. At what a marvellous rate Nature is capable of producing her supplies! A single seed of corn rightly used would soon provide sufficient for all the needs of the world. The gardener is often even troubled by the very prodigality of Nature. "There is nothing grudging in His munificence; He does not weigh His gifts like a money-changer or number them like a cashier. Come; there is enough for all." Whence, then, comes the poverty? From the selfishness, from the love of hoarding, from the withholding of land from cultivation by too many of the rich, and from the carelessness and improvidence of many among the poor. Let the rich use their wealth as stewards for God, and let the poor use all care and thrift, and poverty would cease out of the land.

"Were men to one another
As kind as God to all,
Then no man on his brother
For help would vainly call.

"On none for idle wasting
Would honest labour frown;
And none, to riches hasting,
Would tread his neighbour down."

And so, if time permitted, it would be possible to go over every dark page which makes it hard for men to

believe in a gracious Father, and show that such records are, to a very large extent, to be charged, not upon Him, but on the folly, or sin, or selfishness of man.

But, it may be said, after all deductions have been made, the world presents many a sad spectacle which seems to cast a darkening shadow over the face of God, making men doubt whether in Him there be a *really* loving heart. And so, it may be asked, why could not these be rendered impossible? Why could not the misery of the world be brought to an end? Why could not every trace of anguish, or pain, or sorrow be wiped out from human history, and then be for ever prevented?

So far as I can see, this would only be possible under two conditions. One is *that each being should be a separate and distinct creation*—unconnected with all which preceded and all that will follow. For, of course, much of the anguish of the world is the result of inherited nature. Disease passes from parents to their descendants through many generations. Character is propagated in the same way. Both the good and evil elements live on from parent to child. It is thus in both the animal and human kingdom. If this is to be prevented, it could only be by each life being a distinct creation, with no ties either to the past or the future—each creature fresh from the hand of God. But would not the loss outweigh the gain? For the loss would be of all the sweet and gracious associations between parent and child, between friend and friend. Society would be impossible. In its place there would be a collection of separate entities. Homes would be no more. For this reason alone I, for one, would rather bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.

The other condition is *that the free-will of man should cease.* Much of the misery of the world is the result of our human liberty. Man is free, and so he can wander from

the true path for his life. He may choose the way of death rather than of life. But if all evil is to be prevented it can only be by the loss of liberty, since freedom means the possibility of going wrong. Wrong can only be rendered impossible by the deprival of liberty, the most precious of the Divine endowments, an endowment which renders man likest to God. This is the chief sense in which man is fashioned in the Divine image. "So man is likest and unlikest God of all existence." Likest God by reason of his freedom, unlikest by reason of his use, or rather misuse of that freedom. When God made the world He fixed it under laws from which it could not break; but when He made man He made it possible for him to break the laws of his being. God *commands* the universe; He speaks in tones of entreaty or persuasion to men. How differently in the pages of Scripture God speaks where Men and where Nature are concerned! When God created the sun it was impossible for that sun to resist the law of the Most High. But when He made man He rendered it possible for him to say to his clearest command, I will not. Sin, with its train of anguish and pain, is one of the fruits of this high prerogative. It is a great price to pay; but I dare to say not too great for the priceless boon. For if our liberty were to be done away, if we were driven like machines whither the Divine hand desired, the light and glory of humanity would depart. I say, deliberately, better all the sorrow of the world than to be like dumb, driven cattle before our Maker.

> "Those ills that mortal men endure
> So long are capable of cure
> As they of freedom may be sure;
> But that denied, a grief, though small,
> Shakes the whole roof or ruins all." *

* Herrick, "Hesperides."

If *you* are prepared to sell your birthright for such a mess of pottage, I am not; and if you did, like Esau of old, when too late, you would find no place of repentance, though you sought it diligently with tears.

A philosopher once dared to say that he could have designed a better world than the Almighty. I would rather rest content with the world we have than risk the trial of the philosopher's; for in this world I see quite enough to assure me of the gracious and wise intent of the Most High. I look at Nature through the microscope, and I am overpowered at the delicacy and perfection of all her work. All seems holy because of its perfection. I look through the telescope at the skies, and I am impressed beyond measure by the vastness, the magnificence, the order of the universe. I look out on human life and society, and I see nearly everywhere the tokens of a loving purpose on the part of God. I look *within* my own nature, and find, amid all its evil, gracious purposes; and I feel that "if man is capable of conceiving goodness, the general principle of things, which cannot be inferior to man, must be good." These fill the great breadths of the picture; here and there I see dark spots which I cannot understand; but I let the light of love which shines out of things at large fall on these dark spots, and I say, "Since I find love and care in the general plan of Nature, I will, I must believe, that even in these dark things there is some good and gracious purpose which at present I cannot discern, but which one day will be revealed, and then I shall see that He doeth *all* things well." In moments of depression we may be compelled to say, "All things unto me show their dark sides." Yet in our brighter and therefore saner moods we must also say, "Somewhere there must be light." "If we are to escape the grip of despair we must believe either that the whole

of things at least is good, or that grief is a fatherly grace, a purifying trial."

> "The world may recognise in all times and scenes,
> Though belts of cloud bar half its burning disk,
> The overruling, overthrowing power
> Which by our creature purposes works out
> Its deeds, and by our deeds its purposes."

And I am quite assured of this, as I hear the voice of Him whose voice to me is as the voice of God saying, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father; the very hairs of your head are all numbered." As the Poet Laureate, who has known the bitterness of grief, says in well-known lines—

> "Oh, yet, we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
>
> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroy'd,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
>
> "That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire
> Or but subserves another's gain.
>
> "Behold! we know not anything;
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,
> And every Winter change to Spring."

Or as another great poet of our age in his terse and pregnant manner puts it—

> "God's in His heaven;
> All's right with the world."

THE LEAST AND THE MUCH.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

THESE words are usually interpreted as if they meant that the man who is faithful in little things is faithful also in great ones. That is true, but is not, I think, exactly the truth Christ here enforces—which will be evident when we bear in mind that in this whole passage, which may be regarded as the application of the parable which precedes, two great realms are before the mind of Christ. These are brought into comparison in the phrases "sons of this world," who are contrasted with sons of light; the "mammon of unrighteousness," with "the eternal tabernacles;" "a very little," with "much;" "the unrighteous mammon," with "the true riches." Thus Christ sets forth, from somewhat different aspects, the two great realms of life. If therefore we would understand what He means by the "least" and the "much" of the text, we must regard them in the light of this series of contrasts of which they form a part. Regarded thus, they do not point to things that are small or great in themselves, but rather to two great realms of life. The "least" stands for that visible, outward, tangible kingdom in which the unjust steward had been moving. The "much" stands for that unseen kingdom which Christ here calls "the eternal tabernacles."

I. *Human estimates are thus reversed by the decisions of*

Christ. His larger vision makes that to appear first which we think last, and that last which we think first. We can easily realise how this comes about. Increase of knowledge often reverses our estimates of the value and importance of things. For example, the child just learning to write thinks more of the form than the sense of the words he pens. He is much more anxious to have a clean and well-written copy than to have worthy thought in the sentences; he will take immense pains to erase a wrongly formed letter or a blot upon the page. But when he becomes a man all this will be reversed, and he will care infinitely more for the meaning than the penmanship of his sentences. He will rather have a page full of erasures or corrections than a faulty sentence or one which gives a wrong impression. Once the writing was the greatest thing, now it is the least; once the meaning was the least, now it is the greatest. Thus increase of knowledge makes considerable changes in our estimates of things.

Then, too, in many a realm we do not trust our own estimates, but those of men who are acknowledged masters therein. If we took our own estimates we should make the most ludicrous mistakes. In astronomy, for example, we should probably judge by appearance, and fancy that our earth was the very centre of the universe, and by far the largest portion of it; that the sun was only a huge lamp of dazzling light, to warm and illuminate our earth by day, and the moon a similar lamp for the night, only less bright, and without the power to give heat. We should fancy that the stars were only ornaments of the midnight sky, passing away with the night. But we do not trust our own estimates, but those of men who are acknowledged masters in the astronomical realm. And from them we learn that our earth, which seems by far

the greatest, is amongst the least; and that sun, moon, and stars, which seem so small, are infinitely greater. It is thus in nearly every realm. Why, then, should it not be thus in the realm of goodness? Should we not rather expect that in relation to this realm we are liable to similar mistakes? Is it not most likely that there are men who should rightly be regarded as authorities in this realm, as there are in those of science or philosophy, whose judgments are far more likely to be true than those of men living on a lower moral plane of life? As a matter of fact, a really holy man *does* regard things in a way very different from an evil one. And as we ourselves grow ever so little nearer to perfection, do not our estimates of things greatly change? And if we were quite to reach such perfection, would they not be *altogether* changed? But since we make only so very small an advance toward such perfection, our estimates are of necessity only a far-off approach to the truth; and therefore, if we would get at the *real* truth, we must appeal to and accept the dicta of One who is actually perfect in character. Of course His dicta will startle us. They may even seem fanatical or contradictory, as do those of the astronomer to men ignorant of the real facts of that marvellous science. Recite to such the marvels of the heavens, and they will look incredulous. And to us men much of Christ's teaching has a similar appearance, because our moral and spiritual education is so defective. Is it any wonder, then, that Christ, the Perfect One, should regard things in quite another light from imperfect men? It would be strange if He did not—nay, it would be almost proof presumptive that He was only such a one as ourselves. As it has been well said, "The truest, best judge is, then, Infinite Goodness, and next to it the regenerated sinner, or the saint, the man tried by experience, or the sage.

Naturally the touchstone in us becomes finer and truer the better we are."* And we shall never estimate aright the precepts of Jesus Christ until we ourselves reach the high vantage-ground of holiness, whence He beholds and forms His estimates of things.

And yet there are times of holy vision when we *do* realise that His estimates are right. When in any small measure we follow Him, His teachings commend themselves to our consciences, and we know that they are true. It is so in relation to the words before us. We treat the things visible and tangible as the *great* things; we make them the object of our keenest pursuit; we regard them as the one thing needful in life; but moments come to us when we feel that after all they are not the greatest, but the least. For example, we are successful in our pursuit of these visible things; we have a time of prosperity in our business; we increase our possessions: but we soon find out that these things are not so great in *possession* as they seemed in *prospect;* that they do not bring us so much happiness as we expected; that distance lent enchantment to the view; and now that the distance has gone, and we look at them closely as our own, they seem to have shrivelled up to very small dimensions. Or it may be, in the full tide of our prosperity, one of our loved ones sickens; and as we stand by the bed which we fear may be the place of a last farewell our great things lose their greatness, and we feel that we would gladly give them all up to hold off the approach of the summoning angel of death. Now, a *really* great thing is not dwarfed either by close inspection, or possession, or change of circumstances. It will bear any light, even the fiercest, and shine out with increased glory. "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale it." Wightwick once wrote to Macready

* "Journal Intime of Henri Frédéric Amiel," p. 281.

concerning his friendship, "I value it as if the desired 'having' were still to be obtained." It is only the *seemingly* great which grows small upon closer acquaintance. The least may seem great to far-off beholders, but it is only the least. And Christ, the clear, open-eyed Christ, sees things as they are, and so He tells us that the visible, the external, the tangible, which we fancy great, is after all only the least.

II. *But then Christ sees a close connection between the "least" and the "much."* He declares that only by being faithful in the least are we prepared to be faithful in the much. This is not the conclusion *we* should have reached. It seems to us more natural to say, 'If these visible things are "least," if they are only temporal, we do well to pass by or neglect them.' And as a matter of fact *that* is the conclusion which many good but spiritually unenlightened folk have drawn from the teachings of Christ. Thus the hermit was driven to his cave, the monk to the wilderness, the nun to the cloister. These said, 'The world is so little, so despicable, so sinful, that we do well to flee from and treat it with contempt.' And in Protestant circles, when men have been led to see that there is a greater kingdom than the visible, upon which their hearts should be set, have they not frequently fancied it their duty to neglect and even despise this "least"? They have not, like their counterparts in the Roman Church, fled to the cloister (for a true Protestantism has no cloister); but though they still abode in the world, they felt it their duty to treat it with contempt. So good a man as Richard Cecil once said, "I want to see no more sea, hills, fields, abbeys, or castles. I feel vanity pervading everything but eternity and its concerns, and perceive these things to be suited to children." Those possessed with this spirit treat with a kind of Pharisaic supercilious-

ness the very pursuits in which they are obliged to engage, and cast disdainful glances on commerce, politics, art, science, and the manifold interests of this present world. A draper once said to me—and he fancied himself, I have no doubt, very spiritual as he said it—"Think of a man with an immortal soul measuring out yards of tape." Yes, *think* of it. If he did it faithfully, giving full measure and the quality asked for, he was only obeying Christ's precept, and fitting himself for whatever occupation may await him in the eternal order. It might as well be said, Think of that wondrous Being, whose power keeps all worlds in their orbits, painting with uttermost care a butterfly's wings, which last only for the few brief days of a single summer! Think of Him who "telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names," healing the broken hearts and binding up the wounds of the frail creatures of earth! The Divine method is to call nothing common or unclean. The only Divine Being who ever walked our earth did not shrink from the lowly toil of the carpenter's bench; and if a record of His work thereat had been given us, we should surely have seen that *He* was faithful in that least —yea, as faithful as in the great things of the spiritual kingdom He came to establish on the earth. It has been said of Cardinal Newman, that "vivid and real as was the world of religious mystery to him, he could give the closest attention to matters of secular detail. He could, in a moment, pass from the greatest to the smallest. He would leave the atmosphere of religious thought and meditation, and betake himself to his violin." Thomas Carlyle once said, "I call a man remarkable who becomes a true workman in this vineyard of the Highest. Be his work that of palace-building or kingdom-founding, or only of delving and ditching, to me it is no matter, or next to none. All human work is transitory, small in itself,

contemptible; only the worker thereof and the spirit that dwells in him is significant."*

And it is needful to remember that the work in which we are engaged may be small or insignificant, but that the way in which we do it determines our own character, which is by no means an insignificant matter. In itself the visible realm and all its affairs are as the least; but upon our relationship thereto will depend whether we are fitted or unfitted for that which is *really* great. The drill-ground is not great like the battle-field, but it is the place where men are trained to meet the foe, and without such training they would make a poor show in the day of conflict. The school is but the least compared with the larger sphere of Life, but if its little tasks be neglected the scholar will never enjoy the delights of literature, or be equipped for the larger duties of his after career. And this world is not the great, the abiding sphere for our true life—to us it is the least; but to be unfaithful here in our homes, our business, in the multitude of seemingly little things which go to make up our life, is to be unfitted for the larger, more enduring sphere for which we are destined. We are sometimes tempted to despise the trivial round of life's duties—they seem to have no connection with the larger eternal order; there seems an impassable gulf between them; but they *are* connected, closely connected, Christ says, in that by our relationship to these least things we are being influenced, and the nature thus influenced will go with us from the lower to the higher realm.

"No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun!
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."†

* "Reminiscences," p. 7. † Matthew Arnold.

No, we must not allow the larger realm into which religion introduces us to unduly dwarf the present one, so as to render us first contemptuous, and then indifferent to our work, even to its small and insignificant details. This has sometimes been, and is even now, the effect of certain ill-balanced interpretations of the teachings of Christ, which divorce work from faith—which lay stress upon religious *opinions* rather than religious *living*. Christ demands that we be faithful in the least, even in the unrighteous mammon, as a condition of inheriting the true riches, which with wondrous insight He describes as "that which is our own," that which is vital, normal, essential to our nature.

> "Deeds are the pulse of time, his beating life,
> And righteous or unrighteous, being done,
> Must throb in after throbs till time itself
> Be laid in stillness, and the Universe
> Quiver and beat upon no mirror more."

So Christ summons us, not to one supreme and quickly ended conflict by which the kingdom of heaven will be taken, but to a lifelong faithfulness—in the small as well as the great, in the things of time as well as of those of eternity, in that which perishes with the handling as well as in that which endures.

"Hold fast by the present! Every situation—nay, every moment—is of infinite value, for it is the representative of a whole eternity," says Goethe.

> "Only in dreams is a ladder thrown
> From the weary earth to the sapphire walls;
> But the dream departs and the vision falls,
> And the sleeper wakes on his pillow of stone.
>
> "Heaven is not reached by a single bound;
> But we build the ladder by which we rise
> From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
> And we mount to its summit round by round." *

* "Gradatim," by Josiah Gilbert Holland.

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

FIRST AND SECOND IMPRESSIONS OF CHRIST.

"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. . . . And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him."—LUKE v. 8-11.

SIMON PETER has been well described as "that transparent nature in whom we are able to trace, as in the simplest organism, those changes and reactions which become obscure and hard to trace in structures that are more complete and complicated. Simon Peter has Jesus in his little fishing-boat, when by some exhibition of His power, by some wonderful draught of fishes in the before empty net, the personality of the Master has been pressed close upon His disciple. And then Peter breaks out. Prostrate at Jesus' knees, 'Depart from me,' he cries; 'for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Despondency, almost despair, a deep sight into his own heart, a bitter sense of contrast with the nature which the touch of miracle, like a flash of lightning, had made clear to him—all this is in those passionate and hurried words. But what comes next? When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him. Peter and all the rest! Not only all the rest, but Peter. With the imploring cry—Depart—yet on his lips, he follows Him whom he had begged to go away."* But then, how different was Peter's cry to Christ to depart from that

* Dr. Phillips Brook's "Influence of Jesus," p. 30.

of the Gadarenes who, because they had suffered loss, besought Him to "depart out of their coasts"! But, surrounded by a great draught of fish, a great gain to him and his brother-fishermen, *Peter* cries, "Depart from me." There is a whole world of difference between these two cries, although they find expression through the same word, "Depart." The one had its eye on the visible loss —the other was so intent on Christ that all joy at the gain was forgotten. Words are often mere counters. It is the feeling that lies behind which fills them either with glory or shame. The very oaths of Peter are better than the "Hail, Master," of Judas.

Now, this cry of Peter's, "Depart from me," grew out of a first impression on his quick and passionate nature; soon, very soon, to be corrected by a second one, which leads him with his fellow-fishermen to leave all and follow Christ. The first thought is full of anxiety that Christ should depart; the second so draws him to Christ that he will not let Him go out of his sight.

Our subject then is—First and Second Impressions of Jesus Christ.

The first impression awes, and it may be even terrifies, Peter, so that he falls down at Jesus' knees. He had caught a glimpse of the power that lay concealed in the humble Nazarene whom he had come to acknowledge as Master. In that wonderful moment he seems to have felt that in Him there was a great hiding of strength—that He was far more than at other times He seemed to be. Before they had enclosed the great multitude of fish he calls Christ "Master;" now he is obliged to call Him "Lord." Before he stood as in the presence of a Teacher, a Rabbi; now he stands as in the presence of a King, whose sceptre is over the sea as well as the land. The sense of power overawes him, and he cries, "Depart." In a

little time he will see, what he does not yet, that in power there is a nothing to overawe, provided it be directed by a heart of love. Here the power had been used for and not against him, and should therefore have inspired rather than dismayed.

And this is usually the first impression men have about God, whom Christ came to reveal. They think of His power, and it makes them afraid. They are awed before Him, and since such feelings are not pleasant, they seek to put Him out of their thoughts. Because of this, religion seems to them like a heavy cloud, casting deep shadows over their life. But there is nothing in power to produce such results as these, unless the power be moved against us by anger or hatred. If this is the case there *is* ground for fear. But if, behind the power, there be purposes of love and good-will to us, it is rather a ground for confidence and joy. I may be rightly alarmed at the power of a great army, if the rulers of the land to which it belongs are hostile to my own nation. I may rightly tremble at its numbers, its organisation, its equipment, since these may be used to crush my native land. But I should be very foolish to be frightened at our own army, however powerful it may be; indeed, the more powerful, the better armed and directed it is, the greater should be my confidence and quietness, the more safe I should feel from invasion. The great matter to be concerned about is not the power, but the feeling which lies behind it. If the power of God be swayed by feelings hostile to men, then there is ground for alarm; but if, on the other hand, it be directed by the friendliest feeling, then the very power is a ground of confidence. A monarch's child has no fear of the soldiers that surround the palace, because he knows these are for his defence, and not for his destruction. And we

shall have no fear of the power of God when we know that it is for us and not against us. "Among the children of God, there is always that fearful and bowed apprehension of His majesty, and that sacred dread of all offence of Him, which is called the Fear of God; yet of real and essential fear there is not any, but clinging of confidence to Him as their Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer; and perfect love, and casting out of fear; so that it is not possible that while the mind is rightly bent on Him there should be dread of anything earthly or supernatural; and the more dreadful seems the height of His majesty, the less fear they have that dwell in the shadow of it. 'Of whom shall I be afraid?'"* That lesson Christ taught by always using the Divine power that was in Him *for*, and not *against*, men. Here it was used, not to whelm the fishing-boats beneath the waters of the lake, but to fill them with food for the fisher-folk He loved so well. So Christ always used His power. And when rightly regarded, this is the visible sign that God, His Father, is not against men, but for them, that all the Divine resources are for their aid, and not for their hindrance. Let this thought sink down into our hearts, and the very power of God which now, it may be, we dread, will be as a strong tower in which we may find both rest and safety.

But then there must have been something beyond this. If there had been only the thought of Christ's *power*, Peter would have cried, 'Depart from me; for I am a *feeble* man, O Lord." The power would have wakened the sense of weakness. But Peter cries, "Depart from me; for I am a *sinful* man, O Lord.' There must, therefore, have been the shining out in Christ, not only of power, but of purity. Only holiness wakens the thought of sinfulness. And, in some way or other, Peter must have been

* "Modern Painters."

impressed, not only with the strength, but the sinlessness of Christ. And so he cried, as the light of purity fell on him, "I am a *sinful* man, O Lord." 'In Thy light I see and know it to be thus.' And the *first* effect which purity has upon the heart is to repel. The guilty man shrinks from the innocent, the impure from the pure, the selfish from the unselfish; and men think of the perfect holiness of God, and their *first* desire is to shrink away from Him, to put Him out of their thoughts, to hide themselves from His sight. They fancy that holiness, like power, must be against them. But though this may be the first, it is not the true impression, and that for two reasons.

The first is that holiness includes tenderness. Holiness is opposed to hardness. A really holy nature must by its very nature be sensitive. This, it may be, has been hidden from our sight by the fact that so many of the men who have had a reputation for holiness have been hard; but in so far as they were so their holiness was defective. A perfectly holy nature, like that of Jesus Christ, must be so filled with love that hardness is impossible. We are told of Him that "He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." And this is one reason why we should not shrink from the holiness of God. Our first thought is to shrink away, but the second and truer one will be to keep in its company. The first thought of many a man in his trouble has been to resort to the evil companions who, it may be, led him into it. He goes to them, and finds "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;" and *then* he turns to those whose holier characters formerly repelled him, and there he finds comfort and help. And so men turn away from God, fancying that His holiness is against them, when all the while it is on *their* side, though it is against *their sin.*

The second reason is that holiness desires to liken others

to itself. It is not, like selfishness, exclusive, but rather seeks to include others in its realm. In all holiness there is a passion for its reproduction in others. And therefore the Holy God would have holy children. His cry is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." So that all the resources of the Divine holiness, as of the Divine power, are ranged, not against us, but for us. "I will walk with them and talk with them; they shall be *My* people, and I will be *their* God."

And it was when such second thoughts came to Peter that he ceased to cry, "Depart," and with his fellow-fishermen "left all and followed Him." A wonderful change in a few short hours! For men do not leave their all without some overmastering conviction. We naturally cling most closely to the things that are visible. Behind such forsaking there must, therefore, have been a mighty change of feeling. For there was nothing outwardly attractive in the way to which Christ called them. It was not as if a king had summoned them from their fishing-boats to the splendour and luxury of a palace. All that Christ held out was the hope that they should catch men—that is, win men to a like allegiance with themselves to the despised Nazarene. There may have been a dim idea of future triumph and glory; but it must have been far away, and scarcely visible on the horizon's rim. A second and loftier thought of Christ stilled the cry, "Depart," and made them arise and follow, as if all their hope lay in the company of Christ.

And if the first impressions of the power and holiness of God can only be exchanged for the second—the truer, the nobler ones I have tried to describe—then as great, though not as visible, a change will be wrought in our hearts. God will no longer be to us a Being to be feared, avoided, shrunk away from, but One to be sought unto and

delighted in. The thought of Him will no more be like a cloud upon our spirit, but as the very sun of our life. Counted before as our enemy, He will now be as our dearest and closest Friend. We shall no longer cry, like the silly Israelites, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die," but like the prophet-instructed child, "Speak, Lord: Thy servant heareth." We shall feel that God is on our side, and that we need not fear what man can do to us.

There are those disposed to treat all this as transcendental imagining, which has no foundation in fact. To such let me say, human experience is just as real, just as much a fact, as any of the phenomena with which geology or botany or zoology is concerned, the only difference being that the spiritual experience of a man is infinitely more important than the development of stone or flower or animal. "How much is a man better than a sheep!" And I do not tell merely of my own experience, but of a multitude of others, when I say that to have such thoughts of God, and the feelings they naturally arouse, is, to use Scripture language, like passing from darkness to light. I can vividly remember the time when, fancying that the power of God was a force against me, and that His holiness rendered Him vindictive, I hated the very thought of Him. It fell like a cloud over many a sunny hour. I prayed to Him because I was afraid not to do so. I believed in Him because I dared not disbelieve—if such feelings can be rightly called by such names. I know how Peter felt when he cried, "Depart." There have been times in my life when, if I had dared, I should have uttered the same cry. But such thoughts have gone; in God's light I have seen light, so that I know His power and holiness are on my side—for my help, my deliverance, my salvation. In a word, I have seen God in Christ, and I cannot but trust Him. There is a story told of William

Jay, of Bath, that one misty morning he was walking along a road, and saw in the distance what appeared like a towering form approaching. He was afraid, and half disposed to take to his heels; but the mist lifted, and he saw that the form he dreaded was that of his own brother. So, through the mist raised by their own sin or the foolish representations of the Church, men often regard God as their foe, who in reality is their dearest Friend, for He could scarcely be God unless He were the Friend of men. Will you not come out of the shadowy land of distrust and fear into the sunlight of confidence and love? for then you would rather leave your all than leave Him who declares, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

THE GENTLENESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD.

"Behold therefore the goodness (gentleness) and severity of God."—ROM. xi. 22.

THE word here rendered goodness is in Gal. v. 22 translated "gentleness," and in the Rheims version of the New Testament it is in one place translated "benignity," and in another "sweetness." There is another Greek word (*ἀγαθωσύνη*) which sets forth the idea connoted by our word "goodness." The word in the text is better represented by the word "gentleness," as it is translated in Gal. v. 22. We will, therefore, render it, "Behold therefore the gentleness and severity of God."

Gentleness and severity! These seem to be mutually exclusive. To be gentle seems to make severity impossible; to be severe seems to exclude gentleness. Why does this seem to be so? Because *in men* these two qualities are scarcely ever evenly balanced. The gentleness usually banishes the severity, and renders the nature weak; or the severity excludes the gentleness, and then the nature is hard. But in a perfect nature they are evenly balanced. The one does not encroach on, but only tends to perfect, the other. The gentleness softens the severity, and the severity fortifies the gentleness. No nature can be perfect save as both these elements co-exist in it. There are parents in whom only what is here called gentleness is seen. Their one object in relation to their children is to make things easy and pleasant; and the consequence

is that those children do not respect them; they feel that they can sway them in any direction they please. A good cry, a fit of temper, will extort almost anything. Discipline, training, character-building—these are things unknown in such a home; and the children grow up invertebrate sort of animals—to use the common phrase, they are "spoilt."

On the other hand, there are parents who are only severe. They are mere disciplinarians. The home is a kind of drill-ground. Their children fear rather than love them. The softening, hallowing, combining influence of affection is wanting. If the children are kept right it is by the terror of punishment. Such children do not know what home really is, for the place in which they dwell differs little from a barracks. And they grow up like trained soldiers rather than sons and daughters. So that, even for the smaller circle of the home, both "gentleness and severity" are necessary. Indeed, in the truest sense, severity should be but one expression of gentleness, for without it perfect gentleness is impossible. And for the larger realm of the world gentleness and severity are both needed. Without both it could not be rightly governed. A world whose ruler was without gentleness would be like a prison or a penitentiary, a place in which men would drag out a weary existence. In it there would be none of the elements which give sanctity and beauty to life. Nature would be without any of the things which give delight to eye, or ear, or taste. Society would be without the softening, uniting influence of affection. Human life would be without either hope or love. For all these have their primal source in the gentleness of God. No, we could not do without gentleness. Nor, on the other hand, could we do without severity, for without it confusion would be the order of life. Imagine a world from

which every penal consequence of folly and sin was absent—a world in which men might sin and not suffer, where they might disobey the laws of conscience or of nature and not be punished. In such a world a positive premium would be put on disobedience. Confusion would fall on human society. Anarchy would be rampant, as in a land without law and the penalties it enforces. The restrictive influence of suffering being wanting, offenders would be free to go their own wild way, with health unweakened and vigour undiminished. At present sin is kept from dominance by the severity which reduces the sinner's strength or brings his course to an untimely end. But if this were wanting, inclination would probably lead the whole race astray, and make earth a hell,—or what is more probable, bring the human race to a speedy end. So that the very severity we count an evil is really a good, and instead of being our foe, is in reality our friend. And therefore the Apostle does not scruple to bid his hearers "behold therefore the gentleness and severity of God." We may see these two characteristics of God in every realm.

I. *Take first that of Nature.* Many in our day see *only* severity there. They seem to regard nature as the scene of relentless forces which hold on their way, bringing in their train pain, sorrow, death to men. They tell how the stronger creatures prey upon the weaker and more defenceless; how the hurricane sweeps away vessels and their crews; how the earthquake gulphs men in a sudden grave; how malaria lays low its victims by thousands. They *see* nothing but severity in nature. And doubtless severity *is* there, for nature is the realm of unbending law—law which spares not those who come into conflict therewith. Without such law nature would be a realm of confusion. We should not know how to

regulate our lives. But then the goodness is also visible in nature, in that her laws are full of arrangements which tend to the happiness of men. The laws may, in the main, be unbending, but probably if we quite understood the whole scheme we should see that all of them make for the good of the race. It is true, if you put your hand into the fire it will be burned, but none the less fire is a great boon. If you go out with head uncovered into the full summer sunshine you may get sunstroke; but none the less sunlight and heat are of transcendent importance and value. The storm may overtake the ship at sea, bringing peril to those on board; but at the same time the storm is fulfilling some necessary function.

And these stern laws of nature seem to me to be the outcome of a severity in whose very heart is gentleness; just as parental punishment on a disobedient child is severity, but a severity prompted by a heart of love; whilst who can doubt that many of the arrangements of nature have been ordered only with a view to the happiness of men? It is a jaundiced eye which sees only severity in nature. A more candid survey will probably lead to the conclusion reached by so keen and widely travelled an observer as Mr. A. R. Wallace, who gives it as his opinion that the struggle for existence "brings about the maximum of happiness and of the enjoyment of life with the minimum of suffering and pain."*

II. *Take, secondly, Human Nature.* There are those who tell us that here only severity can be discerned. In moments of suffering and disappointment, it may be, we have thought so ourselves, and that we have cried, like Job, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." God seems severe

* "Darwinism," p. 40.

in that we always have to suffer for our folly or disobedience or sin. We sow to the flesh, and we reap corruption. In some cases we have to suffer for the sins of those who were our ancestors; in others we have to suffer from the folly of our children or our friends. All this is so. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Severity —yes, but a needed severity, and in it, if we could see all, a heart of gentleness.

We repine at the evil inherited from our ancestors; but then we inherit the good as well as the evil. And perhaps it is better to inherit some evil tendencies than not to be bound together by such a relationship as that between parent and child. We repine at suffering caused to us by the action of others, that we have to bear the burden caused by the folly of other people. But if society is to exist, if we are not to be quite isolated, it *must* be so. We do not grumble at joy caused to us by others. Why, then, should we grumble at a little suffering coming to us in a like way? It may have at its heart our real good—to keep us from being self-centred—to keep us closer to our brother men. It may be, if we were quite in our right mind, we should *desire* to suffer with and for others, as He did who "bare our infirmities and took our sicknesses," not because He was *obliged* to do so, but because He *delighted* to do so. I think I had a little glimpse into that feeling a few days ago, when one of my sons was about to undergo a painful operation, and I could not help saying, "Oh, my boy, I wish I could bear a part of it for you!"

We may think it severity that we have to reap where we sow; but if vice sometimes brought forth virtue's harvest should we not be tempted to cleave to the vice? If from a sowing of tares the farmer sometimes got a crop of wheat, would he not be tempted always to sow tares? And the

confusion and uncertainty which would then ensue would show the need for certain and unyielding law. Yes, severity is but the stern force which we mortals need; but behind it there is the goodness of God.

III. *Take, last of all, the Christ.* That Christ should suffer, that the cross should be reared and He put to death thereon, seems to reveal only the severity of God. It does reveal that severity in relation to sin—the assertion on the part of God of its awfulness, that it was something so terrible that it needed the Cross to overcome it. That Cross *does* bring into view not only the gentleness, but the severity of God—His indignation at sin—that to it He would be as a consuming fire. But it is the severity of love—love which does not lay the burden on another, but takes it upon its own shoulders; for on the Cross God takes on Himself the guilt against which He is angry. "*God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto Himself."

This is finely expressed by the words put into the mouth of the Son of God by the author of "Festus"—

> "Creator and Created! witness both
> How I have loved ye, as God-natured life
> Alone can love and suffer.
>
> * * * *
>
> My life is ever suffering for love;
> In judging and redeeming worlds is spent
> Mine everlasting being."

Can we get any glimpse from our human relationships of how that is possible? I think we can. A son has committed a great wrong—a wrong at which his father is full of righteous indignation—an indignation which may compel him to be the punisher of it. But all the while so close, so tender are the bonds which bind the son to him, that the wrong seems to be almost his own; he carries it about in his heart; it is a dark shadow over his way; it

rises before him even in visions of the night. He bears the sin of his wrong-doing son, at one and the same time that his heart is hot against that sin. That is a poor, feeble, halting illustration of how severity and goodness are united at the Cross. There is such severity against sin that the Divine One *must* take it upon His own shoulders. That Cross is the witness of the Divine severity against sin, and at the same time of the fact that it is borne by the God who in Christ suffered thereon.

There is a faint approach to this union of diverse feelings in what is certainly the most pathetic incident of Hebrew history. Absalom is in revolt against his father David; naturally the king is angry at the rebellion of his son. Tidings come of the overthrow of the rebel army, but the king seems indifferent to the good news. To messenger after messenger the one question is addressed, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And when at last the truth is extorted from them of his sudden and awful death, the broken-hearted king, in the agony of his soul, exclaims with a pathos which still rings out in the words, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" For the rebel, in spite of his rebellion, to his father's heart was still a son. Such is the Divine feeling expressed in Jesus Christ—a feeling *against* the sin, but *for* the sinner. And the Cross in which that Divine feeling reached its climax is the assurance that at the very heart of all God's feeling expressed in Nature and in Humanity there is only gentleness, the gentleness of a God of whom it is declared, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."

THE PERFECTION OF GOD.

"As your heavenly Father is perfect."—MATT. v. 48.

THIS is the climax of a series of precepts—a climax in which all the previous precepts are included in one all-embracing phrase, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If it be thus, it follows, as a natural consequence, that the heavenly Father must *be* all that men are here bidden to *become*. Each precept of Christ simply called men on some point to seek a likeness to the Divine nature. In the verses immediately preceding the text He has bidden men to love their enemies; God, therefore, must love those who are His enemies by wicked works. He has bidden men pray for those who persecute them; the feeling in the heart of God must therefore be such as, if it were in man, would find expression in prayer on their behalf. Indeed, prayer for such persecutors is urged on the express ground that we may be sons of our Father which is in heaven—sons, and therefore like to the Father in spirit—who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

To the clear eye of Christ, God is seen to *be* all, and more than all, which in the Scriptures men are bidden to *become*. The perfection to which they are urged is a perfection already existing in the nature of the heavenly Father. The goal for men is manhood after a Divine pattern.

"By all that He requires of me
I know what God Himself must be." *

Now, it is not too much to say—although it may seem a very strong thing to say—that the Church's conception of God has often been much lower than the ideal of life she has held up to men. The Divine nature, as set forth in many of the Confessions of the Church, has been of an altogether lower type than that after which many a good man has striven. God, as represented in many a scheme of theology, has been far removed from being a Father, still farther removed from being a *heavenly* Father, farthest of all removed from being a *perfect* heavenly Father. Many an earthly father would be ashamed to treat his children as theology says the heavenly Father treats His. Christ said that if earthly parents, in spite of the evil in their nature, gave good gifts unto their children, *how much more* would the Father in heaven; but theology has forbidden us to argue from the love, the patience, the undying forgiveness in the fathers of our flesh to the still greater love, patience, forgiveness in Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We have been told that the infinitude of the Divine nature rendered all such comparisons valueless, whereas to the mind of Christ that infinitude only rendered the love, the patience, the forgivingness more encompassing in their scope and lasting in their endurance. If love, patience, forgivingness in men can reach so far, how far may they not be expected to reach in God? The infinity of God assures us of a like infinity in the application, the breadth, the continuance of every feeling of His heart. You would be astonished were one to say of some millionaire, 'There is love in his heart, but of course the vastness of his wealth prevents the full expression of that love.' You would

* J. G. Whittier.

naturally reply, 'His wealth is but the servant of his love, and enables him to minister more completely to the objects of his affection.' And yet apparently sober-minded Christians have argued that the infinitude of God prevents us knowing what His love may be expected to accomplish for men; whereas, rightly regarded, that infinitude only makes it impossible to realise the vastness of the time that love endures, or the might of the forces it employs to accomplish its purposes, or the all-embracingness of its scope. We know with certainty the direction along which infinite love will move, though, by reason of the limitation of our faculties, we cannot realise the endlessness of the Divine seeking for men. These are considerations which have only of late emerged in the thinking of the Church, but they will sooner or later completely banish every shadow by which the perfection of the Divine character has been obscured from the gaze of men.

Now let us look at Christ's own representation. He came out, to use the expressive language of Scripture, from the bosom of the Father. Christ's representation should, to all Christian hearts, therefore, be the first, the authoritative one. In His words we have the thinnest possible veil between God and man—a veil thinner, more transparent than even that in the words of the Apostles. Christ, both in His life and words, is the express image of the Father. The Apostles can only tell us what they tasted and handled and felt of the good word of life; but Christ is the Life itself. And His message is of a perfect Fatherhood in heaven.

The two parts of this message have too often been severed. The perfection has been severed from the Fatherhood. Now, it would be a mere truism to say that the Divine Being is perfect. If He were not, He would not be God. Theology has always affirmed the perfection

of God, but it has too often gone on to paint a picture of Him which appears anything but perfect. The affirmation of an abstract perfection is of little avail. It is scarcely thinkable. Perfection must inhere in a distinct conception or relationship. We naturally ask, Perfect as what? Indeed, there may be perfection in one direction, and the reverse in another. A man may be perfect, or well-nigh perfect, as an artist, and most defective as a parent. A man may be an almost perfect parent, and most faulty as a man of business. Before we can get any clear idea of perfection the question must be answered, Perfect as what? And the whole stress and force of this declaration of our Lord lies in the fact that it asserts the perfection of the Divine Fatherhood. God is perfect as the Father of men. This is the very heart of Christ's teaching, asserted again and again, and even when not asserted being as a kind of background to all His teaching. In it lies the inspiration to lead filial lives. It is parental love which tends to make obedient children. It is not the mere idea that the child owes its life to its parents which quickens love, love which leads to obedience. It is a present and actual love, shining through speech, life, ministry in the home, which knits the child's heart to its parent. And it is the assurance of an unseen but perfect Fatherhood in God which quickens and keeps alive religion in the heart, which is only another name for the response of the child of earth to his Father in heaven. And the message which Christ brings to us is that this Fatherhood is perfect—perfect as to its quality, undimmed by any shadow of sin; perfect as to its sweep of affection, including in its love the evil and the good; perfect as to its endurance, loving with an everlasting love; a Fatherhood of which every earthly one, even the holiest, is but a dim reflection. By means of earthly parentage, whether that

by which we have been blessed or that we exercise to our own children, we are able to climb but a few short steps toward this perfect, this infinite Fatherhood of God. So the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews felt when he said, "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they merely for a few days corrected us after their pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." There, is a hint of the infinite distance the Apostle discerned between the earthly and heavenly fatherhood—the one a fatherhood of the flesh, the other of the spirit; the one marred by selfishness, the other perfect in its self-forgetfulness; the one lasting for a few days, the other ceasing not till we partake of its holiness. Some of you, it may be, have been blessed with a parentage that seemed almost perfect—wise, just, firm, patient, loving. You look back upon it with mingled reverence and affection. It is one of the chosen objects in the secret oratory of your heart. Yes, but beautiful as it is, it is only a hint of that perfect Fatherhood from which all that was worthy in it was derived.

> "All fathers learn their craft of Thee;
> All loves are shadows cast
> From the beautiful eternal hills
> Of Thine unbeginning past."

Let the earthly fatherhood be as a ladder up which we may climb to the heavenly, the perfect Fatherhood of God.

Secondly, *this truth of the perfect Fatherhood of God should be the standard by which we test every doctrine.* I have long been accustomed to ask concerning every doctrine, What idea of God does it involve? Is it compatible with the belief in a perfect Fatherhood in Him? Now let us

subject some of the dogmas which have long held sway in the Church to this searching test.

Take, first of all, what is called *the doctrine of election* —that God was pleased to choose a certain number of His creatures to eternal life, and that He passes by the rest, leaving them uncalled, unpersuaded, to use the words of the Westminster Confession, "passing them by, ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of His glorious justice." Would such a procedure be a worthy one even in a frail and fallible earthly parent? Would it not draw upon him the condemnation of all right-minded observers? Partiality, favouritism in the family is a thing beyond defence. In so far as any parent is guilty of it he fails in his paternal relationship. Paternal feeling goes out to the obedient and disobedient, the responsive and unresponsive in the family. In some cases disobedience only calls forth keener efforts to win to better ways. The wayward are not loved more than those who remain at home, but they are the object of greater solicitude and more persistent pursuit. Often it is concerning the Absalom of the family that the parent cries, "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The vision of a perfect Fatherhood in heaven seems to carry in it the assurance of thought, care, love, effort for *every* child. Nor is this a mere deduction from the ideal of fatherhood. In the previous verses of this chapter we are bidden to love our enemies and pray for them that persecute us. Love to those who oppose us, prayer even for those who persecute us, are laid as a duty upon us. Can what is *right* to us be *wrong* to God? Are *we* to move in one direction, and God in another and opposite one? Nay, this cannot be true. Love to our enemies, prayer for our persecutors, are enjoined, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven, a Father who

makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. In the realm that is visible to us the impartiality of God is clearly seen. His sun rises on and brings to maturity the crops of the evil and the good. His rain falls with the same freshening effect upon the fields of the just and unjust. Nature is the witness for the utter impartiality of the Most High. Is it thus in the lower, and not thus in the higher realm? Has God one method in the realm of Nature, and another in the realm of Grace? Is it possible to believe that there is such a schism in the Divine dealings? If difference there be, surely it is that in the higher the method will be *more* just, *more* considerate, *more* loving than in the lower. The higher the realm—that is the more spiritual—the more just, the more considerate, the more tender the laws which govern it. And yet sensitive and tender souls have troubled themselves with the question whether they were among the elect of God. This has pressed as with an insupportable weight upon their spirits—it has been as a cloud whose shadow has well-nigh excluded light from their lives. In some cases it has cast so deep a shadow that reason has given way, and their days have been passed amid the company of the insane. And all the while, in the very name by which they called upon God, lay the answer to their fear, and the thought which would have calmed their spirits. There is only one word needed to fight this spectre of the soul, and that word is Father, for beyond the Father's love no child can ever pass.

Or take another dogma—*that Christ came and died to meet and appease the anger of God.* Men had sinned, sin must be punished, and therefore, that the sinner might be free, Christ bore the punishment instead. Will such a conception bear the light of perfect fatherhood? Let us see. The child disobeys his father—grievously disobeys

him. Does he look about for some one to appease his anger? Does he choose another member of the family, and inflict punishment upon *him*, that his anger, or his justice if you will, may be satisfied? Is it not the case that the more perfect the father, the less of anger there is? Is not the anger rather grief at the sin—a longing to win the disobedient child to repentance and return? Is not the supreme thought and effort of the father to draw the child to righteousness? Does he not strain every effort to waken a better mind in the child, and convince him that he needs only to come back to find forgiveness? He will not *punish* another child, but he may take means which shall at once reveal his horror at the sin and his yearning love for the child who has thus gone astray. He may despatch another child as his messenger, charged to express at once his grief at the sin and his willingness to receive the prodigal back again to his heart and home. And the Cross is the Divine method for the accomplishment of both these ends; for there the Divine sense of the awfulness of sin is revealed, and at the same time the infinite love of God to the sinner, in that in the person of His Son, in whom He was and in whom He suffered, God takes *on Himself* the burden of human guilt. Thus Christ, as God Incarnate, bears, that He may bear away, the sins of the world—thus in a very real sense "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." But the value and meaning of this is lost if Christ be separated from the Father, concerning whom He declared, "I and My Father are one." Any schism here robs the Father of the glory of Redemption, and the Son of the vital element in His redeeming work. But united, vitally united, there is preserved to us the true Fatherly character of God, and the perfect oneness of will and purpose

between the Father and the Son. This is a conception in deepest harmony with the thought of a perfect fatherhood; but Christ punished for sinners—the object of the Father's anger—may, perhaps, be harmonised with the notion of a low jurisprudence, though it must be a very low one, but it cannot be harmonised with the idea of a perfect fatherhood. Unworthy indeed is the father who needs to be appeased; only in some poor moment of passion is such a desire in his heart. In his better moments the one thought will be how to win his child back to the way of righteousness and peace. And this is the root-idea of the Gospel—"*God was in Christ,* reconciling the world unto Himself." There, is the true fatherly instinct. That is worthy of a father—yea, even of a Father that is perfect.

Or take another dogma—*that human life is a probation;* that we are sent into the world to be tested, and that upon the result of such testing our everlasting destiny depends. So long as we are on the earth we are the objects of a Divine care and love; but if we do not respond to such love on earth, it will cease towards us. Our life may close just as years of maturity are reached, or we may live on to middle life or even to old age. Our course may run to its appointed length, or be cut off by accident, for which we were not responsible; but death, come when it may, ends our time of probation. So long as it lasted God cared for and loved us; but when the probation ended, if we had not believed, the love ceased. Now, I ask, is that compatible with the idea of a perfect fatherhood? Can any limit be fixed to the love of a worthy parent? Did any parent worthy of the name ever say, 'I will give my child twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years; and then, if he do not respond, my love for him will cease and be turned to hatred'? Have not parents

gone down to their graves after years and years of weary waiting for a prodigal child, with words of prayer and benediction for him on their lips? If mortal ones can thus wait, shall not the Eternal One—to whom a thousand years are but as one day—wait for sinful men? St. Peter, in a striking passage, bids us "account the longsuffering of our Lord as salvation." In relation to eternity, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, even a hundred years are but as a speck. To God "a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." Is it possible to believe that the failure of some tiny piece of the mechanism of the body resulting in death should cause to cease the love of the Divine heart toward the sinner?

The more I think of it the more deeply I am convinced that this idea of life as a mere probation is not compatible with the perfect Fatherhood of God. The mind cannot believe in them both. The one must sooner or later force the other out. To believe that this life is a *probation*, and the only one, you must limit and minimise the idea of the Divine Fatherhood. But not so the idea of life as an *education*, of which the present scene is only the first stage, and which will go forward through the ages. This is a conception which *can* be harmonised with ideas of a perfect Fatherhood in God, and which gives new meaning and glory to life. Faithful here in little, we shall have opportunity there to be faithful in much. Unjust here in the least, we may be there unjust in the much. Burying our talent in the earth, we may be sent into age-long discipline, intended to burn out our sin, under whose influence we may perchance come to a better mind, and enter there some lowly class, whose lessons should have been learnt here on the earth; but because in our folly we did not then learn them, we shall be obliged to undergo

the keen suffering which sin ever renders necessary, so that as long as our sin lasts God, by reason of the very purity and strength of His love, will be to us as a consuming fire.

What the final issue in the case of the impenitent will be we know not. Dowered as man is with freedom of will (without which there could be no responsibility, and therefore no sin that could be rightly punished), it is possible that sin may, in certain cases, so turn his will against God, in knowledge of whom is Eternal Life, that all His gracious purposes for his salvation may be set at nought. Two points, however, are clear and certain. As George Herbert says—

> "But there are two vast, spacious things,
> The which to measure it doth more behove;
> Yet few there are who sound them—Sin and Love." *

The first is, that without the yielding of the will to God, by which alone there is delivery from sin, the soul cannot be a partaker of Eternal Life; so long as the soul loves darkness rather than light it will be under condemnation. And that preference of darkness to light cannot be overcome by any Divine fiat—thus accomplished, the change would not be the sinner's, but God's. Only by moral influences working on the will, and leading it from the love of darkness to that of light, can the great change be accomplished. Until this be done only what we call Hell is possible, and what we call Heaven is impossible, to the soul.

The second is that God, being the Father of men, must, by the very nature of that relationship, put at their service all possible aids and means for their recovery to Himself. He must do the best that is possible for them. As the Psalmist declares, "His mercy endureth for ever;" so

* "The Agony."

that whenever and wherever the impenitent become willing and obedient, yielding up their sin and yielding their souls to His Fatherly love, there will stand open

> "The happy gate which leads to where
> Love is like sunshine in the air,
> And Love and Law are both the same,
> Named with an everlasting Name."

Beyond this we have no *certain* ground on which to stand. Into the mysteries of the Eternal World we cannot pry, for we know only in part; and Scripture candidly read, probably because of our imperfect understanding of its teachings, seems to point, in certain parts, to a punishment that is endless, in others to the annihilation of the finally impenitent, in others to a final restoration of all men. If we could reach the true point of observation, we should probably find that between all these declarations there is a point of harmony—that in these seeming contradictions there is, as is so often the case, a larger truth, of which they are partial but vital elements.

Treating of this matter, Frederick Denison Maurice, in a letter to the Rev. F. J. A. Hort, says, "How can I reconcile these contradictory discoveries? I cannot reconcile them. I know no theory which can. But I can trust in Him who has reconciled the world to Himself. I can leave all in His hands. I dare not fix any limits to His love. I cannot tell what are the limits to the power of a rebel will. I know that no man can be blessed except his will is in accordance with God's will. I know it must be by an action on the will that love triumphs." *

Of this we may be assured by Christ's revelation of the Father, that He is doing, and will ever do, the best that

* "The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice," vol. ii., p. 19.

is possible for all His creatures; and that whatever may come to them in the hidden future, even though it be the keenest suffering on account of their sin, they will see and acknowledge that "He doeth all things well," that the Judge of all the earth, by reason of His nature, must do right. Nothing less than this can satisfy the conception given us by our Lord Jesus Christ of a Father who is perfect.

"The great unending future,
I cannot pierce its shroud;
Yet nothing doubt, nor tremble:
God's bow is on the cloud.

"To Him I yield my spirit;
On Him I lay my load:
Fear ends with death; beyond it
I nothing see but GOD.

"Thus moving toward the darkness,
I calmly wait His call,
Now seeing, fearing—nothing;
But hoping, trusting—all."

Let the idea of a perfect heavenly Father sink down into our hearts, a Father imaged in Christ, a Father whose love He did but embody and reveal—a revelation which reached its climax on the Cross, where, with infinite pity, the very God against whom we have sinned, and who was in Christ, bore the sins of the whole world. Let that idea sink down into our hearts, and then as, in days long gone by, the thought of a righteous father or of a loving mother was the mightiest force to keep us from evil, and draw our hearts to goodness, so will the thought of one whose Fatherhood theirs did but faintly image be the mightiest influence to win us from evil, and draw our feet into the way everlasting.

THE VISION OF THE INVISIBLE.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—2 Cor. iv. 18.

THIS is the true attitude of a spiritual mind. Its gaze is fixed, not on the things which are visible, but invisible—"which eye cannot see or ear hear." It is this which differentiates the spiritual from the carnal man, who lives in the realm of things that are visible. It is this power to look at the things which cannot be seen which lifts man above the animal, whose realm is bounded by the reach of its senses—of sight, hearing, touch. The animal has no power to look on the invisible, or hear the inaudible, or to feel the untouchable. It is confined to *one* realm, as the fish is to the water, or the bird to the air. But man may live in two worlds—the seen and the unseen. As the author of the "Christian Year" well says—

> "Two worlds are ours; 'tis only sin
> Forbids us to descry
> The mystic heaven and earth within,
> Plain as the earth and sky."

And as good old George Herbert says—

> "Man is one world, and hath
> Another to attend him."

A man is scarcely a man who belongs only to one world—he is more of an animal than a man.

> "Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how mean a thing is man!"

There are those who, when cut off from the visible by loss of sight or hearing, almost cease to live; thrown in upon themselves, life becomes a burden, since they have no inward ideas on which to feed, no mental sight by which they can see. But there are those who see as clearly when blindness closes the outer eye as when it was open to all things within the range of its vision. When the outer world had been cut off, by his blindness, from Milton, what glorious visions passed before his inward eye, so that he was enabled to give to the world that great epic, "Paradise Lost." He could yet say—

> "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
> I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
> That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
> Either man's work or His own gifts. Who best
> Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
> Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
> They also serve who only stand and wait."

To this latter class belonged St. Paul; indeed, he was one of its most conspicuous examples. So real, so blessed, so near was this invisible realm, that it made the visible one seem shadowy and unsubstantial. The weight of glory of this spiritual realm made the outward trouble of his life seem light and almost unworthy of notice. It made him indifferent to the decay of the outward man, since all the while the inward man was being renewed day by day. And no life is what it should be, what it might be, until above the things which are seen it discerns the things which are unseen and eternal.

Let us consider a little more closely this attitude of the Apostle.

We must not suppose from this declaration, however, that the Apostle was indifferent to the things which are seen, but only that his gaze was most intent on the things which are not seen. He is here telling us, not of the direction of his physical, but of his spiritual eye. The engagement of the spiritual sight with the invisible does not preclude that of the bodily eye with the visible. The spiritual, indeed, quickens the material vision. The more spiritual a man becomes, the more he discerns in the visible world worthy of his admiration. It is a false spiritualism which leads men to despise the visible. Indeed, in another place this very Apostle declares that these visible things reveal the eternal power and Godhead; whilst a greater than St. Paul was keenly alive to all the beauty of the earth, and bade men consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. The invisible realm was a greater reality to Christ than to any of the sons of men, but in no sense did it lead Him to despise the visible world around Him. You cannot find in His words anything approaching to the morbid depreciation of the present order of things which forms so large an element in the speech of a good many so-called religious people. To Him this visible world was a part of His Father's domain just as truly as the invisible, to which He most really belonged. To despise it, to be discontented with it, is to be guilty of ingratitude to Him who arranged it as the first stage of our immortal existence. We must be on our guard against any thoughts or feelings which render us indifferent or contemptuous in relation to the visible around us. In such thoughts there is something morbid or unreal. And as a matter of fact, piety of such an order is not beautiful or Christ-like. Those in whom it is found are like men who try to walk on air, rather than being content with walking on the ground

with their faces to the sky, and in the end they only fall prone to the earth. Robert Browning well says—

> "Who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact
> Ere hazarding the next step."

Life is kept most healthy, most really spiritual, by using all that is about us here, with the consciousness that there is a higher, invisible realm to which we still more enduringly belong.

> "Our little lives are kept in equipoise
> By opposite attractions and desires—
> The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
> And the more noble instinct that aspires."*

We do not become more spiritual by closing our eyes to the beauties of earth and sky and sea, of the faces of our friends, of the glory of art; or by closing our ears to the music of the world or the voices of men; we only grow self-contained and morbid. As Horace Bushnell says; "The unworldly Christian, if he has the true metal of a great life in him, never looks *away* from the things of time, but looks only the more piercingly *into* them and *through* them. He does not expect to find God *beyond* them, but *in* them, and by means of them."

Earth is not, it is true, our abiding home; we must, sooner or later, depart hence; but *it is* our first place of sojourn, where our characters are largely affected by our surroundings—a place ordained for us by heavenly wisdom, and from which we should derive all the good we can. He will be best prepared for the next stage who has wisely used this first one—who, to use the words of Francis Bacon, makes

> "The earth his sober inn and quiet pilgrimage."

To sit down contentedly in the lowest room of earth is to hear at the right time the call, "Come up higher."

* H. W. Longfellow.

Nor must we fancy that in this passage the Apostle is thinking, when he speaks of the things which are not seen, of the world *to come.* He is rather thinking of an invisible world which may be ours now, and here. This whole passage is set in the *present,* not the *future* tense. But, unfortunately, we constantly change the present tense of Scripture into the future. When we speak of eternal life we too often think of it as ours only in the world to come. But Christ always speaks of it as a present possession. "This *is* life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "My sheep *hear* My voice, and they follow Me, and I *give* unto them eternal life." The "other-worldliness," which has been the bane of so much of our religious life, and which thrusts what should be a present possession into another world, finds no warrant in Scripture. Half the passages which men quote about heaven refer to this present life. How often do we hear heaven described as that "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived"! But those words do not refer to a future state, but to this present one, as is clear from the words which follow, "But God *hath* revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." John Ruskin well says, "I hear men speak continually of going to a 'better world' rather than of its coming to them: but in that prayer, which they have straight from the lips of the Light of the World, there is not anything about going to another world; only of another government coming into this, which will constitute it a world indeed: new heaven and a new earth. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

And here the Apostle tells us that he looks—that is, looks most eagerly—not on the things which are seen,

but the things which are not seen. Behind the visible he discerns an invisible and spiritual realm; behind the temporal he sees the eternal. Heaven, doubtless, will be the abiding home of that which is invisible and eternal, but it already exists here. There *are* invisible things even in this visible realm of earth; there are eternal elements even in this temporal sphere. In nature, which is ever changing, where nothing abides in one stay, there is an unseen, an eternal element. Behind its phenomena there is an eternal, a Divine substance, something which, as the word "substance" implies, *stands below.* Nature is but the vesture of Deity.

"Yea, the worlds
Are but Thy shining footprints upon space."

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." The man who only sees the visible in nature does not reach to its true glory and meaning. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge says, "There is something in the human mind which makes us know that in all finite quantity there is an infinite, in all measure of time an eternal; that the latter are the bases, the substance, the true and abiding reality of the former; and that as we truly *are* only as far as God is with us, so neither can we truly possess (that is, enjoy) our being, or any other real good, but by living in the sense of His holy presence."

Nor is it otherwise with humanity. Behind the visible form there is an unseen and eternal reality. The body is temporal in that it is ever changing, passing from babyhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age. Its form, and even its matter, are ever undergoing change, but behind, there is an unseen something we call spirit, which ever preserves its identity, and which maintains a certain likeness between the form of its earliest and latest days. With the eye we can see only the

visible, the temporal; with the eye of the spirit we discern that which lies behind—the spiritual, the eternal. At this moment two sights are before me. With my organs of vision I see your forms and faces; with the inner eye I see that which is invisible and eternal in you; for

"The mind hath features as the body hath."

The things most vital to humanity are invisible. Who ever saw faith, hope, love? And yet, as this very Apostle says, these are the elements which abide; amid the wreck and decay of the body, these may flourish in greatest beauty. We may even recognise these in men and women whom we have never seen in the flesh. Indeed, our life is largely influenced by the thoughts, the feelings, the aspirations, of those who passed away before our entrance to earth. We are *now* swayed by the things which are unseen, by the thoughts of apostles and prophets, of poets and martyrs, of saints and heroes—above all by the life and death of a Christ whose form can no more be seen on earth, and by the influence of a Spirit "whom the world cannot receive, because it *seeth* Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

And the great difference between men lies here—that some see only the things which are visible, whilst others look on the things which are not seen and eternal. The carnal man only uses his eyes—sees what *they* can reveal. The spiritual man uses an inward sense which reveals the unseen, so that to him the real world is the unseen, and the unreal the seen. To the carnal man the closed eye means vacancy; to the spiritual the closed eye throws him back on a larger, a more real realm. The carnal man is "cribbed, cabined, confined" by his senses; the spiritual man moves in a realm whose horizon is ever

widening. Which is the nobler life, which the more worthy, the more satisfactory, the more blessed?

Let us now consider the influence this conception should exert on life.

All that is visible is temporal. We do not know whether the visible will actually come to an end. This visible universe may continue to exist, but our relations with it must cease. But whether earth cease to exist or not, it is ever undergoing change. "O earth, what changes hast thou seen!" In so far as *we* are visible we are temporal. The outward man decays, is laid in the grave, and passes back to the elementary substances from which it sprang, and of which it was built up. To say that a thing is visible is only to say that it is temporal; at all events, in its relation to us. What an argument is here to lead us to hold with a lighter grasp all that can be touched, or tasted, or handled; to keep us from setting our *affection* on things below. Hold them, but hold them lightly. Hold them, but do not let them hold you or draw too strongly your hearts. It is a pitiable sight to see men and women looking on, living for the things which are seen—things which can be theirs only for the brief span of their earthly course. It is still more pitiable when we remember that such a course drags them down from their true position and robs them of their true life. "The man who has no refuge in himself, who lives, so to speak, in his front rooms, in the outer whirlwind of things and opinions, is not properly a personality at all; he is not distinct, free, original, a cause,—in a word, *some one*. He is one of a crowd; a taxpayer, an elector, an anonymity, but not a man. . . . Such men are reckoned, and weighed merely, as so many bodies; they have never been individualised by conscience, after the manner of souls. He who floats with the current, who does not guide him-

self according to higher principles, who has no ideal, no convictions, such a man is a mere article of the world's furniture—a thing moved, instead of a living and moving being—an echo, not a voice. The man who has no inner life is the slave of his surroundings, as the barometer is the obedient servant of the air at rest, and the weather-cock the humble servant of the air in motion."* Well might the clear eye of our Master Christ say of one who cried, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," "Thou fool!" Let us be on our guard against that supreme folly. Our lot is cast in a visible world; our hands are constantly occupied with visible things; we may easily sink down to a condition in which we shall look only on the things which can be seen, missing the eternal element in them, and so forfeiting the true birthright of our life.

But, on the other hand, how blessed a thing it is that there is an invisible element which is eternal—that though the outward man decay, and be even destroyed, yet the inward man may be renewed day by day. The eye out of which love shines may be closed in death, but the love lives on. The voice whose tender tones so delight our ears may be hushed, but the affection remains. The form on which we look with so much delight may be no more seen, but the character, which was its real substance, still abides. What a persuasion is here to covet earnestly the best gifts, to live the real life, to set our affection on things above. It is a blessed fact that the best things abide, and are beyond the power of decay or death. They are like gold, which the rust cannot touch or fire destroy. A pang sometimes strikes the heart as it looks on a fair flower, and remembers that its beauty will soon be over; but the beauty of these invisible things never

* "Journal Intime of Henri Frédéric Amiel," p. 114.

fades. A man gathers precious volumes or noble pictures, and a shadow falls across them as he remembers that they can be his only for the brief years of his mortal life; but no such shadow falls on the spiritual elements which these things may have had some part in quickening in his mind and heart—treasures which, by the varied discipline of life, have slowly accumulated—treasures which are *really* ours, bound to us by ties which death is powerless to break. And if we would only think of this, how it would incite us to seek *first* the kingdom which cometh not with observation, the kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Of *that* kingdom our citizenship will never fail; of *that* treasure we may say, "A treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no moth corrupteth and no thief stealeth."

As John Howe exclaims, "Lord, I have viewed this world over in which Thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and the design of my creation, and can find nothing on which to rest; for nothing here doth itself rest, but such things as please me for a while, in some degree vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo! I come to Thee—the Eternal Being—the Spring of life—the Centre of rest—the Stay of the creation, the Fulness of all things. I join myself to Thee; with Thee I will lead my life, and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell for ever, expecting, when my little time is over, to be taken up ere long into Thy eternity." * Or, as St. Augustine says, "Join thyself to the eternal God, and thou wilt be eternal."

* "The Vanity of Man as Mortal."

THE CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE.

"And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."—1 SAM. x. 10.

THIS is a strange incident in the career of Saul. It is a kind of second consecration. Just before, Samuel had met him, poured the anointing oil on his head, and made him prince over Jehovah's inheritance. . . . But the greater consecration, that of the Divine Spirit, was yet to come. He was to go forward to Gibeah, the Hill of God, hard by the garrison of the Philistines; and there a band of prophets, with instruments of music, would meet him; and amid their prophesying—accompanied by music—the Spirit of the Lord would come mightily upon him, and he would be changed into another man. It is passing strange that this higher consecration should be brought about, not by Samuel—the greatest of the then existing prophets, probably the head of the college of prophets—but by lesser men, whose very names have not even been preserved. Why was not this larger consecration brought about by Samuel himself? In most similar services the central, the most vital part is performed by the highest, the most august member of the consecrating body, such as the Pope in the Roman, the Chief Patriarch in the Greek, the Archbishop in the Anglican Church; but here Samuel, the chief of the prophets, is content to fill the humbler place, and allow the members of

the prophetic college, of which he was the head, to discharge the higher function in relation to the anointing of the new king. Are there any reasons for this? The only one that the narrative suggests is that the company of the prophets furnished certain conditions which Samuel, *alone*, could not supply. For let it be noticed, they do not *do* anything in relation to Saul. They do not bring down the Spirit of God upon him; they do not even pray for such descent; they simply meet Saul, and continue their musical song. They only furnish certain conditions under which the Spirit of God can more easily work. This is all that any mortal can do. No one, not even the holiest, can confer on or communicate the Spirit of God to another soul. Every Anglican bishop professes to do this in the consecration of priests, but it is a mere profession; there is no reality corresponding thereto. When he says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of the ministry," he does not impart the Spirit. He may, with his lips, say *receive*, but he holds forth an empty hand. At the end of the ceremony the consecrated ones have obtained nothing from the bishop. All that the most enthusiastic believers in Episcopacy can rightly claim is that the solemn service has put the mind of those to be ordained in such a condition that they are more prepared to receive the inspiring Spirit into their hearts. That is all that this band of prophets does for Saul. Their presence, their prophetic voices, their musical song, tend to put the mind of Saul into such a state that it is more prepared to receive the Spirit of the Lord. They furnish the conditions under which the Spirit of God can find entrance into the heart of the newly consecrated king. But that is a matter of immense importance, especially when we remember that the Spirit of God is waiting to come, and does come, into all hearts which are in a condition to receive His

influence. To open the windows of our house is to let in the light and air. We do not need to *entreat* these to come in. The open window is a sufficient invitation. And it is thus with the house of the soul. It only needs to be in a receptive condition for the Spirit of God to enter and inspire.

It is therefore of importance to inquire what are the conditions for such entrance, or rather what are the influences which predispose the soul for the reception of the Divine Spirit. These are many. I can now only speak of those indicated by this particular incident.

First of all, it is worthy of notice that all this took place on the hill of Gibeah. The anointing by Samuel had taken place in the valley; this higher inspiration comes to Saul on the hill top. There is something in the influence of mountains which predisposes the soul to high matters. It is difficult to describe or explain, but those who have moved up to such places, unless they be of a very hard type, are conscious of a hallowing influence. Christ evidently felt this, for when He would seek His Father's face in prayer He went to the mountain side or top. The time when He came nearest to His Father, when the heavenly light irradiated His earthly form, was, as we all know, on "a high mountain apart." There He was transfigured.

In a striking passage on the great events which happened on the mountains of Scripture, John Ruskin says: "If, in their remembrance of those things, and in their endeavour to follow in the footsteps of their Master, religious men of bygone days, closing themselves in the hill solitudes, forgot sometimes, and sometimes feared, the duties they owed to the active world, we may perhaps pardon them more easily than we ought to pardon ourselves, if we neither seek any influence for good, nor submit to it unsought, in scenes to which thus all the men

whose writings we receive as inspired, together with their Lord, retired whenever they had any task or trial laid upon them needing more than usual strength of spirit."

Nature, and especially her lofty places, has certain functions to discharge, not only in relation to our material, but also to our spiritual life. God's world may have, was intended to have, an influence upon us, preparing us to receive His Spirit into our hearts. The dweller in towns, whose eye is ever on the works of man, is cut off from one of the influences by which God would dispose the heart to receive His Spirit. Religion has less chance with the dweller in a crowded alley than with the dweller in the open country. There is more fear of the decay of religion in great cities than in villages, which are open to the sights and sounds of nature. Are we not all conscious of wholly different influences in the midst of the crowded city and the quiet country? I know not how it may be with you, but to me a more hallowed feeling comes when I am surrounded by the works of nature than when I am surrounded by the works of man. There is a quieter feeling in the country, which seems to give opportunity for the Spirit of God to be heard within the heart. I do not say that His voice may not be heard in the bustle of the great city, but it is heard with more difficulty; there is more to distract and disturb the mind. I would rank Nature among the means of grace. I would think of her as one of the courts of the great temple of God. Sometimes, to me, she is more really the Holy of holies than the Church, which is often only as an outer court of the Gentiles. Speaking of mountains, John Ruskin says: "But the feeding of the rivers and the purifying of the winds are the least of the services appointed to the hills. To fill the thirst of the human heart for the beauty of God's working—to startle its lethargy into the deep and

pure agitation of astonishment, are their higher missions. They are as great and noble architecture, first giving shelter, comfort, and rest; and covered also with mighty sculpture and painted legend." * And we miss one of the appointed conditions for the reception of the Divine Spirit when we turn from the quiet country and spend all our time in the noisier city. We do well to turn to nature, not only for physical recreation, not only for her beauty, but for spiritual refreshment and strength. Amid her quiet we may perchance feel more keenly the movings of the Spirit of God within our hearts.

Secondly, it is worthy of notice that this inspiration came whilst Saul was in the company of the prophets. The Spirit of God reaches and affects our hearts through men as well as through nature. Feeling is contagious. Mind acts upon mind. How, we cannot explain, for the action of mind upon mind is one of the great mysteries of life; but that it does we all know. Even apart from verbal communication this is the case. There is an atmosphere around every man and woman which communicates itself in subtle ways to others. Just as when a number of people come together they raise the temperature of the place of assembly, so they make a moral and spiritual atmosphere whose effects are more or less on all. Christ promised a special presence of Himself when two or three of His disciples met. Why? Because coming together, influencing each other, they would produce an atmosphere in which His presence would be more fully felt. And this atmosphere affects not only those by whom it has been generated, but even those of another and even alien temper who may come within its range. St. Paul declares that even the unbeliever or the uninitiated into the Christian mystery who comes into the Christian assembly "will fall

* "Modern Painters."

down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed." This prophetic band affects Saul—draws him into its atmosphere, so that he, too, begins to prophesy. Here is found the principle out of which the Church grows. It is built upon the idea that we affect and move each other,—that a religious gathering wakens a religious atmosphere in which the Spirit of God can more easily work. It is said that, on one occasion, St. Ambrose was asked, in the privacy of his own home, to explain a certain passage of Scripture. He replied, "I cannot now, but you shall have the explanation presently in the church." A solitary religion misses one of the great sources of strength, cuts itself off from one great medium of inspiration. Man is almost more essential than nature to a high religious life. A curious illustration of this is found in the life of Wordsworth, who has been called the High Priest of Nature. He thought he derived all his inspirations from nature, but he was mistaken. Mr. John Morley, in his admirable introduction to "The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth," says that "he had no teachers nor inspirers save nature and solitude," but here Mr. Morley is unmistakeably wrong. Students of his life and poetry have noticed that his greatest works were produced after he had been moving among men—after visits to other and more populated places than those around his Westmoreland home. It needed the quickening influence of men as well as of nature to move him to his greatest work. Not one, but both are necessary. Both have a place in our spiritual education. Do we desire the Spirit of God to work in our hearts? would we provide the necessary conditions? then let us mingle with men guided by that Spirit, for through them, in ways we cannot understand, that same Spirit will find entrance into our hearts. Some people fancy that religious education is

chiefly by means of books. It is quite as much, perhaps more, by means of the society of holy men. One who knew Dr. Newman well says that "his need of loneliness was balanced by his need of friendship. 'Heart speaks to heart,'* was his motto." He himself says: "Given the alternative in a university, of social life without study, or study without social life, I should unhesitatingly declare for the former, not the latter." How were the Apostles educated—by a book? No—for the New Testament was not then written—but by the society of Jesus Christ. Through Him the Spirit of God found entrance to their hearts. And the great gift of the Spirit at Pentecost was not to separated believers, but when they were "all with one accord in one place." The company of faithful, like-minded men made the atmosphere in which the Spirit could descend. The lesson lies on the surface. Would we be spiritual men—that is, men in whom the Spirit of God works? let us seek the company of those moved by that Spirit. In such fellowship we shall be best prepared for the Spirit of God to come into our hearts.

Then, thirdly, music was a co-operant influence in this matter. This band of prophets which met Saul were musicians, with a psaltery, a timbrel, a pipe, and a harp before them. Their prophesying was set to a musical accompaniment. The prophetic element in those days largely found expression in song, or if it did not quite do that, music was a condition for the prophetic inspiration. You remember that when Elisha would know how to direct Jehoshaphat, he said, "Now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." †

Music has a strange power of disposing the mind to

* *Cor ad cor loquitur.* † 2 Kings iii. 15.

higher things. I sometimes think that it offers a fitter medium for Divine influence even than speech. Men who grow impatient of the preacher's utterance are sometimes touched by that of the musician. Handel, I fancy, often preaches to men who will not listen even to the greatest preachers. It was not David the Prophet, but David the Harpist, who drove off the evil spirit from Saul. For somehow music has the strange power of taking us into a higher world than that around us. In a celebrated passage Dr. Newman says, with as much truth as beauty: "Yet is it possible that that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound which is gone and perishes? Can it be that these mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so. It cannot be. No; they have escaped from some higher sphere; they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home; they are the voices of angels, or the Magnificats of saints, or the living laws of Divine governance, or the Divine attributes; something are they besides themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter, though mortal man, and he perhaps not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the power of eliciting them." Newman's faith in music was so deep, that when Dr. McNiel challenged him to a public disputation on the points of difference between them, he accepted the challenge on the condition that after his antagonist had said all he wished, he (Newman) would conclude with a tune on the violin.

George Herbert's love of music was such that it over-

came his love of solitude, so that he went twice every week on certain appointed days to the cathedral church in Salisbury, and on his return would say that his time spent in prayer and cathedral music elevated his soul, and was his heaven on earth. And the Sunday before his death, he rose suddenly from his bed, called for one of his instruments, took it into his hand, and said—

> "My God, my God,
> My music shall find Thee,
> And every string
> Shall have his attribute to sing."

There is nothing to compare with music of the noblest kind for composing or inspiring the soul so that the Spirit of God may work therein. As yet we have not realised this to the full; we are on the road to doing so, but there is much ground yet to be traversed. We have not as yet elevated music to its true place in our public worship. We place it lower than prayer or discourse. It deserves to rank on an equality with these, in some senses above them. Did we only throw our whole heart into music, did we only yield ourselves to its spell, we should be more prepared to receive fuller and richer inspirations of the Spirit of God into our hearts. Nor should we confine it, as we often do, to the Church or the Sunday. It should have a place in our homes and in the week. Often after a weary day of toil and anxiety we should be quieted by the strains of holy hymn and psalm, and into our spirits thus quieted the Spirit of God would come.

To sum up. If we desire the Spirit of God to come into and work in our hearts we must put ourselves in a condition for His operations. If we persist in living a life full of excitement, ever intent on the things visible and temporal; if we turn from the calming influence of nature;

if we forsake the company of spiritual folk; if we will not allow music to take us out into the unseen realm, we neglect some of the conditions needful for the entrance of the Spirit of God and for His working in our hearts. Thus we do ourselves an injustice—we rob ourselves of that which is most precious, most vital. For only as "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God" do we live our true life. Let us give that Spirit opportunity for His high and holy work within our hearts.

THE PLACE OF EMOTION IN RELIGION.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."—ROM. x. 10.

A LITTLE book * has recently been published which describes the passage of a youth from faith to doubt, and after a weary season spent in the darkness of that dreary region, how he was led on to a faith stronger, nobler, more intelligent than he originally possessed. The story on which the lesson is displayed is of the slightest, nor is the change from doubt to faith described sufficiently in detail, but it is made clear that it was effected on this wise: Doubt was first aroused, and faith at last undermined, by the effort to understand religion simply by the use of the intellect; and doubt gave place to faith when the hero of the story realised that the intellect was not everything, but that there were other faculties which had a just right to influence and guide the soul. As I read this little book, it seems to me a plea, not for silencing the intellect, but for allowing the emotions to co-operate, and have their proper share in guiding the nature. In one place the author says: "Finally, with regard to these much-suspected emotions of human nature, I would ask, is it rational, or is it in analogy with the rest of the teachings of science, to assume that man's duty with respect to one part of his being should be to crush it out of existence, to deny its existence? For this is, indeed, how the emotional nature has been dealt with among us—as a

* "The Record of a Human Soul," by Horace G. Hutchinson.

dangerous thing that must be left dormant, or if, by unhappy chance, awakened, must be hushed to death again with every horrible narcotic. It seems to me so utterly inconceivable that that can be in accord with its intended functions! No, no; there is a use in this emotional nature of yours, O man, if you can but realise it; its use, indeed, is of such value that all the uses of intellect and muscle are as nothing in comparison with it."

It was thus in the case of the poet Wordsworth. "After a long spell of depression, bewilderment, mortification, and sore disappointment, the old faith in new shapes was given back." And in this way :—

> "Nature's self,
> By all varieties of human love
> Assisted, led me back through opening day,
> To those sweet counsels between head and heart
> Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
> Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
> Hath still upheld me and upholds me now."

Now, that is a very necessary plea, especially at the present moment. Every creature of God is good. At our peril we reject the influence of any one. To the prejudice of the present time against *feeling* is due a very large amount of the scepticism which prevails; whilst, on the other hand, to the equally silly prejudice against the use of the *intellect* in matters pertaining to religion is due the sentimentality, and even fanaticism, which prevail in many quarters. The one faculty was meant to balance the other. Intellect was intended to steady emotion, emotion to inspire the intellect. A nature governed only by its emotions is at the mercy of every mood of the soul. A nature which responds only to intellect is like a delicately constructed piece of machinery with no steam to start or keep it in action. You may as well try to live with *only* a brain or *only*

a heart, as to live rightly with *only* the aid of the intellect or *only* that of the emotions. The brain cannot think save as it is supplied with blood by the action of the heart; the heart cannot guide the course save as the brain directs the impulse received from the heart. The brain cannot say to the heart, "I have no need of thee," nor the heart to the brain, "I have no need of thee." Even the late Matthew Arnold discerned this when he described religion as "morality touched with emotion." And Dr. George Matheson, one of the ablest of modern Scottish divines, in a clever little book just published, says: "I do not believe, however, that moments of devotion are moments of mental vacancy; the wings on which the spirit soars must always be wings of thought." "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Such divorce in the individual of mind and heart is even worse than divorce between husband and wife. When the mind turns the heart out of doors, religion becomes a mere philosophy, and has no more power than philosophy. When the heart ejects the mind, religion becomes a mere sentiment, and becomes mischievous, as unregulated sentiment usually is. Rejection of the emotions leads to Agnosticism, for the *mind cannot* solve all the problems it attempts, and ends by declaring that nothing can be known. Rejection of the intellect leads to the vagaries and manifold follies which have so often brought religion into contempt. In religion mind and heart alike have their separate functions, the one balancing and supplementing the other.

My business just now is to show that emotion is vital to religion, and cannot be dispensed with. This will be evident if you will remember, first of all, *that religion is a faith, not a mere philosophy.* The very word "faith" points to feeling as a vital necessity. Belief is not a

purely intellectual process. To trust is a function chiefly of the heart. *Love*, it may be, is still more entirely of the heart, but faith is closely related to love. If it is not a sister, it is at least a first cousin. For, remember, faith is not knowledge. We sometimes say "seeing is believing." It is nothing of the sort. Seeing is *knowing*. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith may rise almost to the certainty of knowledge; but it is not knowledge, or it would cease to be faith.

"Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

"But on her forehead sits a fire:
She sets her forward countenance,
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

"Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain,
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

"Of Demons? fiery hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first.

"A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain; and guide
Her footsteps; moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child.

"For she is earthly, of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly, of the soul." *

If a logical argument, complete in every particular, could be constructed for religion, it would cease to be a

* "In Memoriam," cxiv.

faith, and become a philosophy. If God could be seen with the eye, or heard with the ear, or proved by logic, there would be no need for faith; knowledge would have usurped its place. Knowledge may be a handmaid to faith, but faith always travels farther than knowledge can follow. Faith is always in advance of knowledge. One of the most keenly critical of modern poets says:—

> "Ah, yet, when all is thought and said,
> The heart still overrules the head!
> Still what we hope we must believe,
> And what is given to us receive." *

If faith had to wait till knowledge had opened and made sure the way she would never move a step. The child trusts his parent long before he can give a sensible reason for so doing. The heart prompts to many a course for which the mind cannot give an adequate and clear reason, as the old rhyme suggests:—

> "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell;
> The reason why I cannot tell.
> I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

Regarded logically, this is most unreasonable; regarded emotionally, it is most reasonable. You say, "I believe in God." The sceptic comes to you and says, "Prove to me that He exists." You stand abashed before him, but that does not prove your position to be an unreasonable one. The sceptic may say, "I believe in my mother's love." You say, "Show me that love exists; prove it by logic." He cannot, which shows that his philosophy does not reach so far as he thinks. But though he cannot *prove*, he *feels* his mother's love. Thus he allows his heart a place in relation to his mother, though he will not allow it a like place in relation to God.

* A. H. Clough.

As Tennyson says of the wife whose husband is in intellect far above her :—

> "Her faith is fixt and cannot move :
> She darkly feels him great and wise ;
> She dwells on him with faithful eyes.
> 'I cannot understand. I love.'" *

Religion claims a place, not among philosophies, but among faiths. It calls to a relationship like to that we sustain to our parents, the centre of which is the heart.

John Ruskin says, in words as wise as they are eloquent: "If we insist upon perfect intelligibility and complete declaration in every moral subject, we shall certainly fall into misery and unbelief. Our whole happiness and power of energetic action depend upon our being able to breathe and live in the cloud ; content to see it opening here and there ; rejoicing to catch, through the thinnest films of it, glimpses of stable and unsubstantial things ; but yet perceiving a nobleness even in the concealment, and rejoicing that the kindly veil is spread where the untempered light might have scorched us or the infinite clearness wearied. And I believe that the resentment of this interference of the mist is one of the forms of proud error which are too easily mistaken for virtues. To be content in utter darkness and ignorance is indeed unmanly, and therefore we think that to love light and find knowledge must be always right. Yet whenever *pride* has any share in the work, even knowledge of light may be ill pursued. Knowledge is good, and light is good ; yet man perished in seeking knowledge, and moths perish in seeking light ; and if we who are crushed before the moth will not accept such mystery as is needful to us, we shall perish in like manner. But accepted in humbleness, it instantly becomes an element of pleasure ; and I think that every rightly

* "In Memoriam," xcvii.

constituted mind ought to rejoice, not so much in knowing anything clearly, as in feeling that there is infinitely more than that, which it cannot know. None but proud or weak men would mourn over this, for we may always know more, if we choose, by working on; but the pleasure is, I think, to humble people, in knowing that the journey is endless, the treasure inexhaustible; watching the cloud still march before them with its summitless pillar, and being sure that, to the end of time, and to the length of eternity, the mysteries of its infinity will still open farther and farther, their dimness being the sign and necessary adjunct of their inexhaustibleness. I know there are an evil mystery and a deathful dimness, —the mystery of the great Babylon, the dimness of the sealed eye and soul; but do not let us confuse these with the glorious mystery of the things which the 'angels desire to look into,' or with the dimness which, even before the clear eye and open soul, still rest on sealed pages of the eternal volume." *

"With the heart man believeth."

But whilst this is the case, the heart does not fly in the face of the intellect. The intellect may not be able to explain the love you bear to wife, or friend, or parent; but it does not therefore call the love unreasonable. And the intellect may not be able to explain the faith you repose in God, but it should not therefore call it unreasonable. Emerson says that Wordsworth held that whatever combined a truth with an affection was good to-day and good for ever. If you try to make the intellect supreme in relation to religion, allowing no place for the heart, you will become an Agnostic. You will as surely fall to the ground as a bird who tries to fly without wings, or uses his feet instead of his wings; but if you will permit your

* "Modern Painters."

heart to work, a faith will spring up which will not move in opposition to reason, but will soar far higher than it can follow.

"If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice 'Believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'

"No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But this blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

"And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reached through nature, moulding men." *

Christ comes as the object of faith, not of philosophy; to be adored by the heart, not to be dissected by the intellect; to be in the unseen what the objects of our deepest affection are in the seen. And no man has a right to pronounce concerning Him until he has approached in the way laid down by Christ Himself. Try to hear music with your eyes, and you will say, 'It is a delusion.' Try to see pictures with your ears, and you will say, 'They do not exist.' Try to reach Christ by your reason, and you will come back saying, 'I cannot find Him.' If ever you are to believe, it must be by the heart, and then righteousness will appear in your life, and confession on your lips.

As William Cullen Bryant says:—

"I would not always reason. The straight path
Wearies us with its never-varying lines,

* "In Memoriam," cxxiv.

> And we grow melancholy. I would make
> Reason my guide, but she should sometimes sit
> Patiently by the wayside, while I traced
> The mazes of the pleasant wilderness
> Around me. She should be my counsellor,
> But not my tyrant. For the spirit needs
> Impulses from a deeper source than hers,
> And there are motions in the mind of man
> That she must look upon with awe."

True, indeed, is the saying of St. Ambrose: "Not by dialectic did it please God to save His people." *

This will appear more evident when it is remembered that the *object of faith is not a set of principles, but a living Being.* And it must be clear to all that the heart is the organ by which we come to know persons. Their *opinions* may be reached by the mind; but we do not know *themselves* save by what we call the heart. Account for it as we may, men and women are an enigma to us till we view them sympathetically. "*To love is virtually to know; to know is not virtually to love.*" And religion calls for the employment of the heart because its very centre is a living Person. To think of God as an actual existence is to be either drawn to or repelled from Him. I cannot remember the time when I did not either fear or love God, and both fear and love are emotions of the heart. Wherever men realise that God really lives there must be *feeling* of some kind in relation to Him. Men cannot leave Him alone. If they do not love, they fear or even hate Him! And Christ came not to *arouse* feeling towards God—that already existed—but to turn hatred to love, fear into faith. The heart does and will concern itself with God. He is its natural object. As the author of Festus says:—

> "We must all think
> On God. Yon water must reflect the sky."

* "Non in dialecticâ complacuit deo salvum facere populum suum."

When the men of science talk of their own subject they are generally calm; but when science touches theology how excited they get! There is no subject which so arouses the feelings as God. Men may begin to discuss Him in a purely intellectual way, but very soon the heart makes itself felt, and they become excited. Why? Because He is the natural object, not of the mind, but of the heart. When Christ, who came to represent Him, was here, He was surrounded by an atmosphere of feeling. Neutrality was impossible. Men either hated or loved Him, were either drawn to Him or repelled from Him. If, however, we would rightly reach Him, we must cease from a mere intellectual pursuit; by searching we shall not find Him; the heart must lead, and we shall find His word to be true, "The pure in heart shall see God." In one of the prefaces to his poems, Wordsworth says: "Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle upon those of eternity—the elevation of his nature which this habit produces on earth being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence, and giving him a title to partake of its holiness."

And then, still further, *since the end of religion is obedience, the heart is wanted.* To know what we ought to do, and to do it, are two very different things. For the first, perhaps, the mind is adequate; for the second we have need of the heart. "I approve the better, and I take the worse way," said one of the ancients. Why? Because there was no force strong enough to impel him to that better way. That is what we all want—what the philosophers call the dynamic force, to impel, to constrain us to obey what we see we should. Most of us have got knowledge enough of the right way; what we lack is the impulse to walk therein. The body is like a delicate

and subtle piece of machinery worked by the heart, which sends the blood pulsating through every vein and artery. Without the energy quickened by the heart all would be in vain. What the heart is to the body the emotions are to the soul—the impelling force. Faith in a perfect God is the true channel in which they should run. He should be their highest object. Thus the course of life will be rightly directed, and the nature reach out to its truest and best development.

But, it may be said, the heart is, of all parts of our complex nature, the least under our control. Love, like the wind, comes we know not whence, goes we know not whither! Faith springs up spontaneously, or not at all. To bid men believe or love is a waste of breath. We can no more command these than we can the winds of heaven. I quite agree with this. I never yet bade a single soul believe or love. I know too well the nature of faith and love to do so. But I have tried again and again so to speak of God as He is revealed in Christ, to represent Him as so just, so true, so holy, so beautiful, so loving, that the vision of Him should naturally waken faith.

"If for every rebuke that we utter of men's vices, we put forth a claim upon their hearts; if for every assertion of God's demands from them, we could substitute a display of His kindness to them; if side by side with every warning of death, we could exhibit proofs and promises of immortality; if, in fine, instead of assuming the being of an awful Deity, which men, though they cannot and dare not deny, we are always unwilling, sometimes unable to conceive, we were to show them a near, visible, inevitable, but all-beneficent Deity, whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven, I think there would be fewer deaf children sitting in the market-place."*

* Ruskin, "Modern Painters."

It would be folly to bid a man admire a glorious sunset, or to reprove him for not doing so. It would be the reverse of folly to take him to some fine post of observation and say, 'Look!' If the sight did not waken admiration, no precept would ever do so. And God does not come to *us* with the *command* to believe or love. When He did thus to the Israelites it was a failure. He takes another course. He makes Himself visible in His Son Jesus Christ. Thus He stands before our eyes that we may behold. And when thus we really see Him, faith springs up—it must spring up—in our hearts, as surely as admiration does in the heart of a beholder of a glowing sunset, or the hearer of noble music, or the spectator of some heroic deed. As the author of the "Theologia Germanica" says: "When God is known, He is also loved, and whosoever knoweth God must love Him." What Guinevère said of Arthur, whose face was as an angel's, is true in a far deeper sense of God:—

> "It was my duty to have loved the highest;
> It surely was my profit had I known:
> It would have been my pleasure had I seen;
> We needs must love the highest when we see it."

A child is sinking in a stream; you see a man at the risk of his life leap in to save the precious life. It needs no command to make your heart glow with gratitude to such a deliverer. It leaps up at the sight. To look at Jesus Christ, to follow His career on earth—a career culminating on a cross where voluntarily He gave up His life, with words of pity and prayer for those who nailed Him thereon—touches the heart so that it is constrained by the love of Christ so as to live, not unto itself, but unto Him who illustrated by act His own words: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

THE VARIETY OF CHRIST'S METHOD.

"For He knew what was in man."—JOHN ii. 25.

THE first Passover at Jerusalem during our Lord's ministry was marked not only by His cleansing of the Temple, but also by many mighty works. These seem to have aroused much public enthusiasm in His favour, so that many believed on His name. The faith, however, was one wakened by His *miracles* rather than by *Himself*—a faith which Christ always rated at a low value, and so He did not commit Himself unto them, "because He knew all men." The verb translated "believe" in the 23rd verse is the same one which is translated "commit" in the 24th verse. So that it might be said, They believed in Christ, but Christ did not believe in them. And the Apostle in the passage before us gives the reason. He probably did not see it at the time. It is more likely that at the time he was surprised and even vexed that Christ did not care for the harvest which His works had produced—that He seemed to throw these people into the ranks of His foes rather than receive them into His own. But in the fuller knowledge of His Master that came in after days John saw the reason, and knew that it was right. Christ did not trust them, because they were not worthy to be trusted. He saw that their faith grew out of astonishment at His works rather than perception of His character. They fancied that their faith was *in Him*, but in reality it was

only in *something He had done.* If He had trusted in such men, in the time of temptation or opposition they would have fallen away. No; He knew what was in these men, and therefore did not commit Himself to them.

In Christ's knowledge of men lies the clue to the variety which characterised His ministry. Such variety meets us at every turn in the Gospels. Never was there a method less stereotyped than that of Christ. It was not regulated by the *class* to which men belonged, nor their *age*, nor *surroundings*, but absolutely by their individual character and need.

The Swiss philosopher Amiel pertinently asks the question, "Why do doctors so often make mistakes?" and answers it thus: "Because they are not sufficiently individual in their diagnoses or their treatment. They class a sick man under some given department of their nosology, whereas every invalid is really a special case, a unique example. How is it possible that so coarse a method of sifting should produce judicious therapeutics? Every illness is a factor simple or complex, which is multiplied by a second factor, invariably complex—the individual, that is to say, who is suffering from it; so that the result is a special problem, demanding a special solution, the more so the greater the remoteness of the patient from childhood or from country life." Christ's intimate knowledge of human nature enabled Him to respond, in the realm in which He moved, to every requirement, and therefore He had no ready-made formula, no routine advice, no fixed precept, for all. Every case was treated on its merits. Matthew Arnold says of Goethe :—

> "He took the suffering human race;
> He read each wound, each weakness clear,
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said, '*Thou ailest here and here.*'"

And Charles Kingsley ascribed to John Henry Newman the power of "laying his finger-tips" on the sore place, and often healing by the very touch. That may be, in a measure, true of Goethe and Newman. It was true, true to the uttermost, of Christ. And therefore Christ seemed often to contradict Himself. He told one to do what another was bade to leave undone. He laid down as essential to one a condition of which another heard nothing. The Church is so fond of uniformity that she has made obligatory on *all* what Christ enjoined only on *certain* natures. She has striven for uniformity where Christ practised variety. The particular precepts of Christ are applicable only to men of nature kindred to those who first received them. You cannot rightly apply Christ's precepts even to every member of the *class* to which the first hearers of them belonged. To the rich young man Christ said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; . . . and come, take up the cross, and follow Me;" but you have no right to lay that precept on all rich men, or even on all rich young men, but only on those who, like him, are *trusting* in their riches, and are thereby shut out from the kingdom of God. If a man's *heart* is not set on his riches he need not give them all away. It is better to use them wisely and generously all through his life, than, at one stroke, to scatter them, for thus they would probably be scattered unwisely, and do as much harm as good. This is clear from the fact that Christ did *not* lay that same precept on other rich men that came to Him, or at whose tables He sat. Nicodemus was a rich man, but he heard no such precept, but one of an altogether different kind. *He* was told, "Ye must be born again." And why? Because he came trusting, not in his riches, but in his *knowledge*. His first word revealed his position: "Rabbi, we KNOW." Confidence in his knowledge was the door that shut *him*

out from the kingdom of God. And Christ seems to say to him, 'Knowledge will not save you; only life from above will do that.' And that is the precept which the intellectual who trust in their knowledge need. They must be led to feel that knowledge, while it lies like grain in a granary, yields no harvest; that not till the heavenly rain and sun are permitted to touch and quicken it can the dormant life be developed. But you must not hurl that text at everybody, in a way to make them feel that there must be some great crisis of the soul, like to that when they were born into the world. Life comes to some in that way, but not to all. In some it grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength. Some of the best people that ever walked the earth never knew such a crisis. They were born into the kingdom as the day is born—so gently, so gradually, that you could not say when the night ended and the day began. They were born as love is born—a faint glow of pleasure in the presence of another, which grew deeper and deeper, till it became the one overmastering passion of their heart. Multitudes are born into the kingdom so gradually as to be unconscious of any crisis. They are in it; but they could not tell you how they came there. They were born again by the Spirit, working through the sacred influences of their home, into which they came with a predisposition for the things of Christ, inherited from godly parents, whose best life was in Christ—a predisposition nourished by loving influences and holy ministries. They love Christ, and are serving Him; and these are the best proofs that they have been born into His kingdom. Christ would not have said to *such*, "Ye must be born again." He would have recognised them as possessors of this new and better life—as Paul did in the case of Timothy. Do not go to such and tell them of your more special experi-

ences, and ask them if they have had such. That will only give them needless anxiety. They are like children who have been brought a long journey in the night—it may be asleep—to a new home. They could not tell you the way by which they were brought; but they are well assured that a place is theirs in the new habitation. I used to be dreadfully troubled as to whether I had been the subject of a right kind of experience, whether it came up to the proper standard. I see clearly enough now that Christ never asked men of the way, but of the end. "Lovest thou Me?" is *His* question. And any one who can say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee," however unconscious as to the way in which the love was quickened, belongs to His flock and has a right to His name. Nay, Christ Himself acknowledged the mysteriousness of the process of change when He said, in reply to the question of Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The wind is known only by its results, and the best proof of birth from above is that the soul is seeking those "things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

There is a like variety in Christ's way of *cultivating* religious life. He recognised the fact that souls, like plants, need diverse treatment. Some need checking, others stimulating. If you would have good hyacinths you must not hurry their growth. The bulbs must be buried away from the light for a season, or the flowers will be lacking in size and richness of colour. Apply the same method to the rose, and your plant will die. Christ saw that a like variety of treatment was necessary in the spiritual realm. One nature needs repression, another

needs stimulation; one must be made to tarry, another to haste. One man asks to be permitted to say farewell to those at home before he sets out to follow Christ. Christ sees that to say farewell will stir all his home affections, so as to overcome the newly awakened love for the kingdom of God; and stern, therefore, is His word: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Another man, one of enthusiastic and unreflecting nature, exclaims, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Christ sees that he has not counted the cost, that in the stress of trial his heart will fail, and therefore exclaims, so as to set all the difficulties before him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Whilst yet another of this triple company says, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Christ sees that his widowed mother, the desolated house, the dependent children will make an appeal greater than he can bear, and with seeming hardness, but with real tenderness, He cries, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." To some, Christ enjoins silence; to others, speech. Some, Christ *calls* to discipleship; others, He allows to *attach themselves* to His company. This lesson of variety springing out of the differing temperaments of men has not yet been fully learnt by the Church. She has too often striven after uniformity; meeting all men with one precept, and demanding from all one experience. Thus she has been forgetful of the example of her Master. Thus she has failed to discern the almost infinite variety of human character. Our common proverb says, "One man's meat is another man's poison." That has application to the spirit as well as to the body. But the Church has often forgotten this, and whilst studying the remedy, has overlooked the natures

of men, and so has fancied that one medicine suited all. There are medicines that bring new life to some, and almost quench the life of others. Quinine is a veritable elixir to some; it is almost poison to others. Christ is the great Physician for all souls, but we must seek at His hands the special remedy we each need. And we may find this if we will take the trouble to discover how He treated the natures most like to our own. Is your *heart set* on your possessions? His word to the rich young ruler is for you. Are you intellectual, fancying that your knowledge will save you, a Gnostic of these modern days? Then His discourse to Nicodemus is for *you*. Are you timid and doubting? Then His treatment of Thomas should be your study. Are you voluble, greater in speech than action? Then the precept sternly bidding to silence is for you. Each one of us may find his prototype in these Gospels, for every type of character is here, and when we have found it, there is Christ's treatment for us.

There are instances, however, in which the nature cannot discover for itself the special treatment it needs. This presupposes a discernment which all do not possess. In some cases the spiritual teacher must do for the soul what it cannot do for itself—apply Christ's method. This demands not only a knowledge of Christ and His ways, but also a knowledge of the natures to be treated. The teacher, whether of adults in the congregation, or of children in the home or school, should know what is in man. But you say that is impossible to us in the way that it was possible to Christ. In connection with Christ's knowledge, Bishop Westcott, perhaps the foremost New Testament student of our time, points out a very striking and remarkable distinction—that where St. John speaks of Christ's knowledge of His *Father* he uses a word which implies intuition, conviction (*εἰδεναι*); but where he speaks

of His knowledge of *men* he uses a word with an entirely different signification, implying movement, progress (*γινώσκειν*). Now, that is very significant—that Christ's knowledge of the Father should be regarded as an intuition, and His knowledge of men as growing clearer and clearer. This is in harmony with the ideas of the whole Gospel—that Christ, coming from the bosom of the Father, knew Him perfectly from the first; but that, as Son of man, He grew, not only in stature, but in wisdom. How did Christ grow to this deep knowledge of men? Surely as we may do—by sympathy. Perfect sympathy with men opens the door to their inmost being; there is no other key that will turn the many-warded lock of the door to the human heart. Charles Kingsley says: "To understand any man, we must have sympathy for him, even affection. No intellectual acuteness, no amount even of pity for his errors, will enable us to see the man from within, and put our own soul in the place of his soul. To do that one must have passed more or less through his temptations, doubts, hunger of heart and brain." Or, as Emerson puts it: "You must, for wisdom, for sanity, have some access to the mind and heart of the common humanity. The exclusive excludes." Christ's sympathy with men was perfect, and therefore He knew what was in man. So perfect was that sympathy that His disciples, as they saw Him healing men, remembered the words of the prophet, and applied them to Him: "Himself bare our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." He put Himself in the place of men. Their infirmities He seemed to bear; their sicknesses He seemed to carry. He looked at men, not from without, but from within. He looked them through and through. And hence it was that every applicant received at His hands distinct and separate treatment. He never repeated His prescriptions. Every

nature being different, the prescription in each case was also different. In His presence the timid were encouraged, the bold repressed, the sanguine made to pause, the hesitating forced to decision; men who trusted in their riches were bidden to put away their false confidence; those who used them wisely were suffered to retain them; those lightly esteemed of men were highly esteemed of Him. All this grew out of the fact that He knew what was in man. This is the knowledge that we need both in relation to ourselves and others. In relation to ourselves, that we may gain from Christ the very precepts adapted to our nature; in relation to others, that we may rightly apply Christ's words to them. But we go blundering or, fancying that knowledge of the Gospels alone is enough; which is pretty much as if the doctor should be content with knowledge of medicines, without a like knowledge of the body which they are intended to heal. If we are to do anything for Christ and for men that is of any value, we must know what is in those we desire to help or teach. We must reach what Keats exquisitely calls "the inward fragrance of each other's heart." And there is only one way to such knowledge, and that is love—love which makes us suffer with, or, as we say, sympathise. *That* will open doors, let them be ever so closely barred. *That* will give entrance at last to natures, be they ever so reticent or self-contained. *That* is the "open sesame" of the soul. And then we shall judge a righteous judgment concerning men. We shall not expect like results from wholly differing natures. We shall not condemn the keenly intellectual if their faith is not so ardent as that of the more emotional. We shall be tolerant of warmth from the vigorous and decisive. We shall be patient with those whose natures are so sluggish that they cannot reach out to new ideas. We shall not hastily condemn

the critical if they cannot accept all that we believe. We shall forgive ignorance if there be warmth of heart. And our effort will be to lead the intellectual to the warmer atmosphere of love, the hot-tempered to calmness, the slow of mind to larger thought, the critical to the place of faith. Well does Schiller say :—

> "If thou *hast* something, bring thy goods ;
> A fair return be thine !
> If thou *art* something, bring thy soul,
> And interchange with mine."

We shall, to use the Apostle's word, strive to be "workmen needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," giving to the babes their milk, and to the strong men their meat. If we would be servants of Christ we must *know* those we seek to serve, and then, like Him, knowing what is in men, we shall give them their portion of meat in due season.

THE QUIETNESS OF THE DIVINE METHOD.

"And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."—1 KINGS xix. 11-13.

THIS is, perhaps, the most forcible example of moral and spiritual teaching in a dramatic form in the whole range of Holy Scripture. And when regarded in the light of the mental condition of the prophet to whom it was granted, its force is still more evident. Elijah—the prophet of fire—a man of highly strung emotional nature, a man who sometimes rose very high, but, like all such men, sometimes sank very low, had been marvellously elated by the great scene on Carmel. He imagined that the idolatry of Baal had been completely overthrown by that one decisive stroke, and that now Jehovah would reign supreme in the hearts of the people. His spirits had therefore risen high as the great mountain on which the memorable decision had been effected. But the excitement wore away, and he saw, as so many besides him have, that no great spiritual reformation is wrought by one stroke, however decisive. He saw that the people still lusted after Baal, that the powers of the nation were still upon the side of idolatry, so that he seemed alone and solitary—the prophet of the Lord. Thus he sank from the clear and bracing air of the mountain to the enervating

atmosphere of the valley below. The reaction which follows excitement came, and the prophet who, in solitary grandeur, could stand confident and fearless in the presence of the thousand priests of Baal, before the fierce oath of a vindictive woman fled to the desert, where his only wish was to die, because he was not better than his fathers. With nerves unstrung by excitement, with the reaction therefrom wakening despondency in his heart, with a sense of loneliness which made life seem a burden, and death a happy door of release therefrom, he plunges still further into the desert, and comes even to Horeb, the Mount of God. There the inward conflict of his spirit is imaged in the play of the great forces of nature. There the earthquake, the wind, the fire do before him their strange and awful work. He fancies that in them, as in the mighty drama of Carmel, God is surely at work. He stands awed in spirit and bowed in body at the overwhelming scene. But, somehow or other (we are not told how), the conviction is awakened in him that in these, in the highest sense, God is not found. And as this conviction springs up in his heart, there succeeds to the vivid strokes of the lightning, the rushing of the wind, the trembling of the earth under his feet a deep quiet, a silence which could be felt, unbroken by rush of wind, or note of bird, or low of cattle, a silence so profound that it seems to speak, and which he can only describe as "a still small voice." But we are *not* told God was not in the silence. Nay, the prophet felt that He *was* in it. Amidst the awful stillness the Divine message reaches him, pointing him away from the desert to the busy haunts of men, and assigning him therein his place and work.

There are two lessons, amongst many others, suggested by this scene, which are specially worthy of our notice. The first is *that the divinest work is not accomplished by*

the agencies that seem the mightiest. The prophet's first thought seems to have been that the fire, the wind, the earthquake were special tokens of a Divine presence. The natural man is always disposed to take such a view. Many a one who, amid the summer's calm and beauty, never thinks of or turns his face to God will both think of and turn to Him when the thunder-cloud is in the sky and the lightning runs its fiery course in the air. As the vessel sails calmly over placid waters many a traveller lives as if God had no existence; but when storm succeeds to calm, and the vessel is now mountain high on the wave, and now deep in the watery hollow, he will go on his knees as if God had suddenly sprung into existence. And a like spirit is observable in the spiritual realm of which the visible is but an illustration. Elijah fancied that God was at work in Carmel as the fire fell to devour the sacrifice on the altar he had reared. *Then* he fancied that His work was going forward in Israel, but that when the exciting and striking scene was over God had forsaken the land. And there are those who think that God is working only when there is a great crisis in the Church, when there are scenes like those of Carmel. They discern His presence only where there is excitement, noise, sudden and striking results. When in the spiritual realm there are tokens like to those of the fire and wind and earthquake of Horeb, they fancy that God is near, but in the quiet which succeeds He seems to have departed. Such times of excitement do little for the Church, just as Carmel did little to foster real religion in Israel. I will not say that they do nothing. They do—they have their function just as the tempest, the lightning, the earthquake have in nature; but where would be the fruitfulness and beauty of the earth if these were the only forces at work? These do but clear the air, so that rain and dew and sun-

shine may more freely play on grass and flower and tree. The real work is done by these quieter forces—forces which do not strive nor cry, nor cause their voice to be heard—forces which work, not at distant intervals, as the more striking ones, but day by day and hour by hour. To use the words of John Ruskin: "And yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual; that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood: things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally; which are never wanting, and never repeated; which are to be found always, yet each found but once;—it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given." And it is thus in the higher spiritual realm. There the air may be cleared by times of excitement, but if, when it is thus cleared, the Spirit of God, like the dew and rain and sunshine, be not allowed to nourish and develope the life of the soul, there will be no growth that is either worthy or fruitful. Spiritual results are not wrought to any perfection in a moment, however decisive. Like all great results, they are produced little by little. The statue is wrought not by one blow of the chisel, however well directed, but by blow after blow—the blows getting gentler and more carefully directed as the statue nears completion. The idea of a picture may be a sudden inspiration—in a moment it may dawn on the imagination of the artist

—as, indeed, may also the statue—but only by touch after touch can the bright imagining of the painter be transferred to the canvas. And in a moment the soul may discern its true ideal—may clearly see it in the light of Christ; but years of quiet, persistent endeavour will lie between the discernment and the realisation of such ideal. And for such realisation there must be constant and quiet pursuit—a pursuit not limited by times of religious worship and instruction, but extending to the whole life, and including the hourly resistance of inclination, the oft-repeated fight against temptation, the continued seeking of patience, gentleness, grace, by which the life may be adorned with beauty. Elijah fancied that one great stroke on Carmel would convert and regenerate the nation. If, like him, we fancy that one great act of consecration will regenerate our natures, like him we shall find ourselves utterly mistaken. Neither national nor individual regeneration is thus effected. There is no royal or sudden road thereto. Little by little the road must be travelled. Sudden growth in grace, as in nature, is too often unhealthy, because ill-matured. Genius has been described as an infinite capacity for taking pains. That may well stand for a description of holiness. It is the patient continuance in well-doing which results in beauty of character, and ensures honour and immortality. It is this from which we too often shrink. We would rather have a speedier method. And to such inclination popular religion too often panders, and hence its results are so poor, so unreal, so unable to bear anything like close scrutiny. Some one once remonstrated with a painter for the pains he took with his pictures. He replied, "Sir, I paint for eternity." We are character-building for eternity. Let us not grudge any pains in the fashioning of a habitation of God through the Spirit.

And the second thought is *that God is most really*

in the gentler influences that are ever moving around us and within us. It is difficult to realise that He is—difficult, as Elijah found it, to realise that in the hush which followed the fire, the earthquake, the wind, God really was. But if there be any meaning in this story, it is that the silence was more really Divine than the noise, the flash, the trembling which went before. And one of the hardest lessons we have to learn is that God is in the quiet, the gentle influences which are ever around us, working upon us as the atmosphere does, without any visible or audible token of its presence. The great and strong wind arrests our attention; but who thinks of the atmosphere in which we live as our element? But the wind is only the atmosphere in motion; when at rest it is just as necessary to our life, just as Divine a gift. But who stands in awe before the atmosphere on which our life depends? And the reason is that it is always around us like a silent sea. If it were usually agitated, sweeping across us as a mighty wind, it would be its times of stillness which would astonish us. The fact is, it is only the rare and exceptional which impresses. The Swiss peasant discerns no glory in the snow-clad peaks which lift their heads above his chalet in the valley—peaks which awe *us* to reverence and worship; and why? Because they are always within the range of his vision. It is a weakness of us mortals that the glory dies out of that which we always possess, or which is always around us. If we were quite in our right mind, instead of growing less astonished at the objects ever before us, we should grow more so, because we should see more deeply into, and understand them more perfectly. It *is* so with really great natures. Wordsworth spent nearly all his life amid the hills and dales of Westmoreland, but instead of growing less wonderful, they grew more wonderful to his seerlike

eyes, so that the meanest flower that blows often wakened in him feelings too deep for tears. This should be the rule, and not the exception. It should certainly be so in the higher spiritual realm. The Divine influences which are ever working within us should not lose their Divineness to us because of the constancy of their operation. The Spirit of God, which is ever alluring us to the good, ever seeking to hold us back from the evil, should not seem less Divine because always prosecuting His holy mission in our souls. Because His mode of operation is akin to that of the atmosphere rather than to that of the tempest, we should not despise it. It would be folly to say, Take away the atmosphere, and give us in its place the rushing, mighty wind. Thus the gentle growth and beauty of both man and nature would be impossible. In reality, and judged by its results, the atmosphere is mightier than the wind. And the tender, gracious influence of the Spirit of God, if we will only allow it to work, will bring forth in us fairer fruit than the tornado. It seems to me that God is more really in the gentle than the apparently mighty; in the still, small voice than the tempest. And we must seek to discern this. It is, perhaps, because we fail to do so that He comes sometimes in the tempest. We do not find Him in health, and so He comes in sickness. We do not find Him in prosperity, and so He comes in adversity. We do not find Him in the stillness, and so He is compelled to come in the storm. But He would rather, I believe, take the gentler way, just as the parent would rather come to his child in tenderness than force. But He must come; and if the door does not open at the soft play of the summer air, it must be opened by the rude blast of the tempest. God will sometimes almost force Himself upon us from His very concern for our good, will arm Himself with terror when

He would rather be clothed in the soft robe of gentleness. But how much more blessed for the door to be opened to admit the sunshine than to be forced open by the crash of the storm. Christ's chosen way is described in the prophet's words: "He shall not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets; a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench;" but His concern for men was so deep that, when they would not hear His gentle voice, out of very love He cried, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

"But all God's angels come to us disguised:
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,
One after another lift their frowning masks,
And we behold the seraph's face beneath,
All radiant with the glory and the calm
Of having looked upon the face of God." *

Let us not by our folly force Him to such sterner ways. Let us rather cry:—

"Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder;
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder;—
Of duty grown Divine,
The restless spirit still;
Of sorrows taught to shine
As shadows of Thy will.

"O God! the pure alone—
E'en in their deep confessing—
Can see Thee as their own,
And find the perfect blessing;
Yet to each waiting soul
Speak in Thy still, small voice,
Till broken love's made whole,
And saddened hearts rejoice." †

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* J. R. Lowell. † James Martineau.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

The Relation of the Members to its Head.

"The household of God."—Ephes. ii. 19.

ST. PAUL'S conceptions of Christianity are due to two influences, the first being what he calls, speaking of the very essence of his conversion, "the revelation of the Son of God in me;" this was the inner spiritual influence; the second being the story of Christ's career, which at this time had not been reduced to the form in which we now possess it in the four Gospels, but was preserved in the retentive Oriental memories, and told as a story, in the gatherings of that age. These were the two influences which went to determine the Christian thought of the Apostle. Of course, his own keen spiritual mind enabled him to seize on the elements in the story which were most vital and essential, and led him to distinguish between its letter and its spirit; but those we have mentioned were the materials upon which his mind wrought, and from which there grew that conception of the Christian faith which finds such wonderful expression in his memorable letters to the Churches of that age.

The phrase now before us, "the household of God," is but a reflection of the ever-recurring reference, in the teaching of Christ, to God as the Father, both of Himself and of men. The idea of a household grows out of Christ's idea of God as *Father*, just as the idea in the word *citizen* in the previous part of the verse grows out of Christ's

conception of the *Kingdom* of God. Christ's declaration of the Fatherhood of God gives birth to Paul's idea of the household of God, just as His words concerning a Kingdom of God gave birth to the idea of men as *citizens* therein. It is to this idea of the Christian society as a household we now give our attention. In another place, regarding it, not in the light of its Head, but of the spirit which binds it to that Head, he calls it "the household of faith."

Now, what are the essentials of a household? A household is a society marked by diversity in unity. It is like light, which is composed of the many colours of the spectrum, each colour having a character of its own, but when combined with the others forming the pure white light by which we see and work. So a household is a combination—a unity of different characters under one head. It is not a uniformity in which all are alike, but a unity composed of diversity. A household made up of members all precisely alike would be dull and uninteresting, each one being only a reflection of the rest. They would tire of each other's society; but a diversity of mind and character, bound together by a common loyalty to the head of the household, gives us the *variety* together with the *unity* for which we naturally crave. And this is the true conception of the Christian society we call the Church. Without the diversity it would be as uninteresting as the grains of wheat in the garner—which are all alike; without the unity it would not be a society at all. Both ideas must be kept clearly before the mind if we are to reach a true conception of the household of God. Let us see what each involves.

I. Of the Diversity.

(1) *In a household identity of thought is not essential.* Each member of it may have ideas of his own. Such

diversity grows naturally out of the variety of character and mind in its members. One may be critical and compelled to prove all things; another may be trustful and even credulous, and so ready to take things for granted. One may be disposed to judge by appearances, another to get beneath appearances to underlying principles. One may be artistic or poetic, another practical and matter of fact. To insist that all should have the same views on all subjects—on politics, on art, on religion—would either rend the household asunder or force the various members into silence. One result would be as bad as the other. No wise parent would take such a course. The Church is a spiritual family, and should be regulated by like principles. The desire for uniformity of belief in the Church is based on utter forgetfulness of the diversities that exist in mind and character. These render such uniformity impossible. Identity of belief *cannot* be reached. It never has been reached even in Churches constructed on the uniformity principle. The divergencies of *real* belief are great even in the Church of Rome. There are as many schools of thought in the Established Church of England, or in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, which have very definite and clearly articulated creeds, as in the Churches which demand no subscription to either confessions, or creeds, or articles. Indeed, the very men who set their signatures to creeds interpret them in very different ways. They all look at the same things, but with different eyes, and from different points of observation. The same words mean different things to different men. Until all minds are constituted alike, and I hope that time will never come, there will never be identity of thought. Men read the same book, and get different impressions from it. They look at the same landscape, and carry away different recollections of it. They associate with the same person,

and regard him in different lights. Even inspired men have not identical thoughts of the same subject. The Apostles all looked on the same Christ, but were impressed with points in His life that were quite distinct from one another. If the thoughts of John and Paul, of Peter and James concerning Christ could be represented by four distinct pictures, they would be found to be alike and yet unlike. We should see that it was the same Christ they saw, but regarded from various stand-points. Their writings are characterised by variety in unity. If identity of view be regarded as essential to a household of faith, then there must be many households instead of one, for, on that principle, not even the Apostles could be gathered into the same one. And in our day, men equally good, equally devout, equally truth-loving regard Christ in different lights. Shall we say that until they all see alike there can be no household of God? You may as well say that there can be no human household unless there be identity of thought in all the members. On that principle households would cease to be, and every household would consist of one member. Novalis once wrote to his friend Just: "I gladly admit that I believe I regard and judge of religion very differently from the way in which you do, and that I have entered upon a path which must appear to you exceedingly strange. Nevertheless we are friends, and will be friends; and in this feeling our religions, or rather our theologies, find a meeting-place. The religion which is *your* friend has revealed herself to you through her understanding, as a warm-hearted understanding is the main feature in your character. She has approached *me* through a warm-hearted phantasy, for this, perhaps, is the most prominent feature in my peculiar nature. Should not, then, our manifold diversities and the ultimate principle of our whole human

constitution be exhibited in this most important relation of all?" *

Christ spoke of many *folds*, but one *flock;* many different views of truth, but one great unity of spirit. Emphatically did He declare to disciples who forbade one who followed not with them, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is on our side." The household of God will never be constructed on the narrow basis of doctrinal uniformity, but on loyalty and love to Him who is its ever-living Head.

A Highland peasant-woman once applied to her minister for admission to the Church. The minister examined her in the doctrines of his Church—an examination she utterly failed to pass. He said, "I am sorry that I cannot receive you." Deeply moved, she turned away, saying, "I may not be able to answer his questions, but I think I could die for Jesus Christ." This was too much even for his Presbyterian strictness. He called her back, and promised her the membership she desired. Any one who can truly say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee," belongs to the household of God, though all the children should close the door against him.

It is only another side of the same truth to say, (2) *In a household identity of experience is not essential.* There is as great a variety of inward life as of mental thought in the members of a family. The differences of *feeling* are as great as those of intellect. One member of the family may be demonstrative, another reserved; one may be impulsive, another calculating; one may be full of sentiment, another practical. Though all have sprung from the same parentage, yet they are as diverse in feeling as

* "Hymns and Thoughts on Religion," by Novalis, with a Biographical Sketch, translated and edited by W. Hastie, B.D.

the form of their faces, or the colour of their eyes, or the height of their bodies. Each one is a self-contained and separate unity. Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger—no, nor even a brother or sister—may intermeddle with its joy." Dwelling together as they do, they yet touch each other only on the surface. In each there are abysmal depths of feeling and experience which not even the dearest may sound. Every thoughtful parent sometimes looks at his children and wonders what is moving in each of their hearts—those hearts which, though revealed by look and word, are yet more largely concealed. As an American poet expresses it :—

"Thought is deeper than all speech,
Feeling deeper than all thought;
Souls to souls can never teach
What unto themselves was taught.

"We are spirits clad in veils;
Man by man was never seen;
All our deep communing fails
To remove the shadowy screen.

"Heart to heart was never known;
Mind with mind did never meet;
We are columns left alone,
Of a temple once complete.

"Like the stars that gem the sky,
Far apart, though seeming near;
In our light we scattered lie;
All is thus but starlight here.

"What is social company
But a babbling summer dream?
What our wise philosophy
But the glancing of a dream?"*

Mr. Keble points to the same fact when he says—

"Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile and sigh.
Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,
Our hermit spirits dwell and range apart."

* Christopher P. Cranch.

And that mysterious thing we call personality involves the idea that each must have an experience of its own—distinct, separate from that of all others. The trustful, confiding nature will travel by an easy way to the Cross, but the inquiring, critical nature will have to move along a road full of obstacles. The practical nature will obey without questioning, whilst the philosophical will need to see the reason before it can obey. The gentle, guileless nature will move to the better life scarcely conscious of crisis or change, whilst the warm-blooded and high-spirited may have to go through a veritable conflict before it is enrolled in the ranks of Christ. Of one it may have to be said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine," whilst from another's lips the cry, the bitter cry, may have to be heard, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The experience of the soul is determined by its character and constitution. There is no such thing as an ideal experience; no, not even in the case of Apostles. Paul entered the kingdom by a very different path from that of John. One conversion sufficed for Paul; Peter needed many conversions. Christ concerned Himself with the end, not the road by which it was reached. Had men faith and love? He did not trouble Himself as to the way in which these had been quickened in their hearts. It would have been well if the Church had followed a like method. But too often she has demanded to know the road by which men and women have come to the kingdom of God. You might as well require the child to have a conscious knowledge of its birth other than the fact that it is alive. His presence in the family suffices. Faith in Christ ought to be enough for the Church. She has no right to ask about its genesis. But she *has* done this, and

demanded proof of conversion. She has made the proof to consist not in the fact of holy character, but in certain spiritual experiences which accompanied the change of feeling and motives; she has wanted in the convert a conscious knowledge of his birth-hour; she has laid stress on the process, and not as she ought, on the result. And in many sections of the Church there is a sort of feeling that there is an ideal experience through which all must pass. And here lies one of the perils of religious biography, in which the inner processes of the soul are laid bare. Many read such books as the "Confessions of Augustine," or Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," and they say to themselves, 'I have never had an experience like to this. I have never known the agony, the strong crying and tears depicted here. These are strange to me. Can I be a child of God, never having known these?' And so they are troubled and distressed. To have such experiences you must have had natures like to these men; you must have wandered far, like the prodigal, or you could never have the long journey to travel back again to home and father. Your experience will be regulated by your nature and the course you have taken. Was the elder son not a son because he knew not the agony of his younger brother? To know that he must have gathered all together and gone into a far country. If, by God's great mercy, you have been kept at home, surrounded by loving Christian influence, you may pass into the kingdom almost without knowing it; but if you have wandered far, there must be the bitter, weary journey back to your true home. Do not trouble yourself about the way. If you are in the home, with love in your heart to the Father—a love which leads you to obey His word—then, no matter how, you *are* part of the household of God.

II. Of the Unity of the Household.

In what does it consist? Unmistakeably in loyalty to its head. Loyalty in a home is only another name for love. Love is the only true atmosphere of a household:—

> "Sweet is the smile of home, the mutual look,
> Where hearts are of each other sure;
> Sweet are the joys that crowd the household nook,
> The haunt of all affections pure."*

All are members of the household who are loyal. The children may have different conceptions of the head of the family; they may regard him in different ways; but if they be loyal, loving, they are a real part of the household. Within this limit there is room for almost endless diversity. One child may understand one part of the father's character, and another may understand another part. The boys may best appreciate his business capacity, and the girls his emotional nature. One may appreciate his intellectual qualities, another his practical ability. But all belong to the household who look up to and trust him as the head. So it is in the household of God. One mind may be compelled by its very nature to grapple with the problems of the Divine existence; another may be able to believe without attempting to prove. One may need definitions and theories; another may quietly rest in the Lord. One may be careful and troubled about many things, like Martha; another, like Mary, may sit at Jesus' feet. But the central, the essential thing is to be loyal to the Head. If a man's heart be fixed on Christ, the visible Head of the household, then he belongs thereto. The porter at the door has no right to ask any question

* John Keble.

but this: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" If that question be answered in the affirmative the door must open to the great house of God.

And closely connected with, yea, a part of such loyalty, is *obedience to the Head.* Obedience is loyalty in action. Works are the fruit of faith. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." The most loyal is the most obedient child. But, then, obedience in a household is not like obedience in the army. The home is not the realm of law, but of love; it is not studded over with commands, but filled with the atmosphere of affection. The slave just takes and obeys the commands that are given, in the letter. Circumstances may change and render the commands inappropriate, but still he obeys those very commands. The child obeys in a different manner. He does not take the letter, but the spirit of commands. He adapts the command to circumstances. He asks, 'What would my father wish to be done under the circumstances?' He will thus often disobey the letter in order to keep the spirit. He will alter the command to suit the occasion. His supreme desire will be to do the Father's will. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth," or would do under the circumstances, but the son claims to know and to act upon his knowledge. And thus loyalty leads to obedience, not to the letter, but to the spirit of commands—obedience to a Spirit bearing witness within, not to a code of law. This is the way love always works. It moves in the atmosphere of freedom. It has learnt the Father's will, and its supreme purpose is to obey. Is this your position? Can you look up into the face of Christ and say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee; Thy will I would be willing to do?" then no matter what your view of the *theories* which men have framed of Christian facts, no matter what your special experience may

have been, you are in the household of God—the household of faith; and of you the Father's cry is this: "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." Of you, as of these early Ephesians, it may be said, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

The Relation of the Members to One Another.

"The household of God."—Ephes. ii. 19.

IN a previous discourse we saw that a household consists of a diversity in unity—the diversity springing naturally out of the variety of constitution and character in the members—out of the special thought and spiritual experience of each; and that the unity is due to loyalty, which is only another name for love, to the head of the household, common to all its members. We will now look at the household in another aspect—namely, the relationship of its members one to another. Sonship is one side of the home relationship; brotherhood is the other. No one can be a good son unless he be a good brother. The true parent cares as much for right feeling *among* his children as for right feeling to himself. To any worthy household the ancient Hebrew exclamation should be applicable: "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Indeed, the parent should be the great unifying influence—the point around which the various members of the family gather; drawing near to him, they must of necessity draw near to one another; and one Lord, and one baptism with His Spirit, must of necessity make a united household.

"If I truly love The One,
All He loves are mine;
Alien to my heart is none,
And life grows divine."

If our eyes be fixed on the Head, our hearts must go out to all who belong to Him.

"But Heaven and Earth have been
More near, since Earth hath seen
Its God walk Earth as Man, since Heaven hath shown
A Man upon its throne:
The street and market-place
Grow holy ground; each face—
Pale faces marked with care,
Dark, toil-worn brows—grows fair.
King's children are these all; though want and sin
Have marred their beauty, glorious within,
We may not pass them but with reverent eye."*

It is perhaps more difficult to be loyal to our brethren than it is to be loyal to the head. Where the head is concerned the idea of authority comes in, but where the members are concerned the relationship must be quite spontaneous. The child may be afraid to offend his father, but that feeling does not arise in relation to those who are his brothers or sisters. The father will probably not put so severe a strain on the loyalty of his children as they may do on one another. Rivalry is not so likely to spring up between child and parent as between brothers and sisters. Difference of age, which naturally wakens deference to the parent, is not present to the same degree, to waken it between those whose years are more on an equality. For these, and many similar reasons, it is more difficult to keep unity *in* the household than between the household and its head. But the New Testament is quite as insistent on the one as on the other. It lays equal stress on the two parts of the great declaration, "One is your

* Jean Ingelow.

Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." It is quite as eager that the brethren should draw close to one another, as that they should all draw close to the Head of the family. Christ was as much distressed when His disciples quarrelled among themselves, as when they fell from their allegiance to Him. One of His most earnest prayers was, "That they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Christ is far from satisfied when men as separate units look up to Him—He longs that their faith in Him should unite them closely to one another. The underlying feeling of the Society for the Reunion of Christendom is a true one, only it seeks unity in the letter rather than the spirit—in an outward and mechanical, rather than in an inward and sympathetic way. If I may make use of such a halting illustration, the rent garment of Christ cannot be made whole by the stitches of ecclesiastics but only as the rent is healed by the spontaneous drawing together of the sundered parts. Christendom will never become one by the efforts of ecclesiastics or theologians, but by the growth of a Christ-like spirit in all its members. It is useless to expect that the household will grow to uniformity in thought or modes of worship. The diversities of gift and character would prevent this; but amidst such diversity there may be one spirit, and in this the real unity may be found. If I may so phrase it, there may be a spiritual freemasonry amid great diversities of thought and forms. The members may recognise each other by Christ-like signs, though they may speak different languages, and be widely separated in their ideas. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, and the unity of the Kingdom cometh in like manner. The Christ-like spirit will reach over very high

barriers of ecclesiasticism, and join hands with those who in every place love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Christ discerned in a soldier of Rome—trained in its pagan ways—a faith such as He had not found even in Israel, which had for ages been under a Divine education, and wherever we find a like faith we must be quick to recognise a member of this great household of God. The form which such faith may take is, to a large extent, a matter of ancestry and surrounding. If you had been born in Italy you *might* have been adherents to-day of the Roman Church. If my parents had belonged to the Established Church I *might* to-day have been ministering at her altars. These are surface differences; below, there may be the real substance, the Christian spirit. It has been said of the late Empress Augusta, "Particularly interesting is her endeavour to avoid all religious partiality in her works of love. There exist written proofs that her religious feeling was so noble that it rose far above any influence occasioned by the individual belief of those with whom she came in contact. The Empress was a humanitarian in the noblest sense of the word. She was convinced that in religious impartiality lay the secret of preparation for a piety that would content mankind." Our position, too, is determined largely by inherited constitution; one nature leans in one direction, and one in another. This is a matter beyond our control; but each disposition may be baptised with the Spirit of Christ. The passionate Peter, the ardent John, the intellectual Paul, the desponding Thomas, the practical James, retaining their individuality, are yet all one in discipleship to Jesus Christ. No one type of nature may say to another, 'You have no right to be in the household of God.' Each one has as good a right to a place there as the other, provided there be love in the heart to Christ. For a household embraces a great

variety of character—the sombre and the merry, the slow and the quick, the poetic and the practical. "The love of the human race is increased by their individual differences, and the unity of the creature made perfect by each having something to bestow and to receive, bound to the rest by a thousand various necessities and various gratitudes; humility in each rejoicing to admire in his fellow that which he finds not in himself, and each being in some respect the complement of the race."* And one of the great mistakes often made by the Church, especially its Nonconforming portion, has been to regard only those of a serious and even sombre type as fit for the household of God. Beneath the surface of what we call the serious type may be hid evils peculiar to it, just as beneath the more merry there may be perils peculiar to it. The believing may fall into credulity, just as the inquiring may into unbelief.

The Church is a household, and should offer room for children of every type, provided they turn their faces to the Head. The Church is a school in which scholars of every kind should be welcomed, provided they are ready to sit at the feet of Christ and learn of Him. The Church is a hospital where every form of disease may come under the hand of the Great Physician, provided only that they will permit Him to carry forward His healing work in their natures. And through such variety, the discipline of the household will largely go forward. A family whose members were all alike would lose one great means of education. Were all sanguine, prudence would die out. Were all sombre, the family would grow like to a funeral company. Were all merry, the family would become riotous. But let there be a mingling of diverse characters, and they tend to balance and modify one another. And so ought it to be in the household of God. There should be room for

* "Modern Painters."

all diversities of character, that by contact and converse they may modify and balance one another, the solemn moderating the merry, the merry brightening the solemn, the poetic elevating the practical, the practical steadying the poetic, the guileless quickening faith in the calculating, the calculating preserving the guileless from being deceived. This is a part of the Divine method of education for our life. We are members one of another, so that no one may say to another, "I have no need of thee." There may be some far removed from the serious type of character, who think, 'The Church is no place for me. I should be out of harmony with such a household!' Did God, then, make a mistake when He gave such a nature? Is the variety of character in the world an error in the Divine working? Or did He mean only a single type to be found in His household? To ask is to answer such questions. The Church needs such as you to keep it from being sombre, just as you need the Church to keep you from being too light. In so far as any type of character holds aloof from the Church, so far is she incomplete. Take one of the seven colours of the spectrum from light, and how much more difficult it would be to see! And the Church is not what she should be, because there are types of character which hold aloof from her. Let them come in, and the gain would be mutual.

But then in such a household there must be mutual forbearance. The peace of a family is gone if any one member seek to dominate the rest, and always have his own way. Many a household has been ruined by self-will. And more than aught beside, this has rent asunder the household of God. And the worst of it is, that scarcely ever has such self-will been regarded, as, indeed, it is, as utterly alien to the Spirit of Christ. Who ever heard of censure or excommunication for self-will? We have

heard of it often enough for heresy, or what passed for heresy, when, indeed, it often was the very truth of God, and in the next age was so regarded; but who ever heard of the Church, save in the earliest times, saying to one of its members, 'You are spoiling the family life by your dogmatism, your self-will. You must either curb it, or leave the household. We cannot have the peace of the family disturbed by one member'? And yet self-will is in direct opposition to the command and example of Christ. "He pleased not Himself." "He made Himself of no reputation." By the lips of His Apostle He bade us "look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others." To deny ourselves, to check the self-will so strong in many of our natures, is a part of the cross we have to bear; nothing is more vital to a household than this. Where it is found there is sure to be "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." As Mr. Hayes, in his striking poem "The Last Crusade," makes the saintly Louis say to his followers :—

> "Remember, gentlemen,
> We all are servants of one Master, Christ;
> Bound by one law, redeemed by one love,
> And every brow sealed with the self-same print
> Of blessed brotherhood. It matters not
> How wide soever we may stand removed
> In rank, or wealth, or might, if but our hearts
> Are all attuned to one clear harmony;
> It matters little how we be disjoined
> In outward strategy, if but our souls
> Are urged by one great motive to one end."

Indeed, lying at the root of self-will is the idea of infallibility—such confidence in our own opinions that all others are regarded as erroneous. The learned Dr. Thompson, late Master of Trinity College, once said, "None of us are infallible, not even the youngest." Nothing is more irritating—nothing is more likely to

disturb the unity of the home or of the Church, than some one member who poses as an oracle. This is most mischievous when, as is so often the case, it is associated with ignorance. Far enough, too, is this from the modesty of the real Christian spirit, as it is seen in the Apostles, from whose lips we catch such words as these: "Great is the *mystery* of godliness." "We know in *part*, and we prophesy in *part*." "Now we see through a glass, *darkly*." "We know not *what* we shall be."

> "We have but faith; we cannot know,
> For knowledge is of things we see;
> And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
> A beam in darkness; let it grow."

Hitherto I have pointed only to the negative side of the matter, the things to be avoided. There is a positive side, things to be done. The true conception of a household is of a company in which the resources of each of the members are at the service of all the rest; so that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." It should be a ministering company. The joy of one should be the joy of all. The sorrow of one should be the sorrow of all. A company in which the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves. Those on the hill top of faith moving down to those in the valley of doubt, to lead them to the height of vision. The glad and merry bearing some of the sunshine of their nature to the morbid and gloomy. The strength of the young being put at the service of the feeble, and the wisdom of the old being made to guide the young. Those who have this world's goods counting themselves stewards, and distributing to those who need.

As Henri Frédéric Amiel says: "Bring your health and your strength to the weak and sickly, and so you will

be of use to them. Give them not your weakness, but your energy, so you will revive and lift them up. Life alone can rekindle life. What others claim is not our thirst or our hunger, but our bread and our gourd."

"Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort's art,
That thou may'st consecrated be,
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy!
For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christ-like touch."

In such ministries, prompted of love, the home consists, whether it be of man or of God. Indeed, the home is but the miniature of the greater household of God. A home is not made by those who live and eat and sleep under the same roof. It may be a hotel; it is not a home. The home does not begin to be until it is a place of mutual ministries, inspired of love. And the household of God is not constituted by men and women who hold the same creed, repeat the same prayers, join in the same sacraments—these are but the form, the letter; not until the spirit of love, reaching out to mutual help, arises, is it worthy of the name of a household of God. John Ruskin rightly says, "For there is a true Church wherever one hand meets another helpfully, and this is the only holy or Mother Church which ever was, or ever shall be."* The longing of each of our hearts should be—

"May I reach
That pure heaven—be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense!
So shall I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world."†

* "Sesame and Lilies," p. 86. † George Eliot.

And let it ever be remembered that this cannot be brought about merely by those who are called ministers. A household is determined by the character, the conduct, the spirit of *every one* of its members. One gracious spirit may do much to sweeten, but one acrid temper may embitter its atmosphere. I have sometimes heard people complain that their Church was not social, that it was cold and divided—they laid the blame on others, but all the while they did nothing to improve its atmosphere, but rather did much, by their carping, to render it worse. Even a bad-tempered child may spoil a home, and one gossip, or retailer of scandal, or constant fault-finder may do much to quench the home life of the household of God. Each one of us carries around him a moral atmosphere, and by the union of all in the Church its atmosphere is made up. And the question each one should ask is this: Am I making or marring the character of the family of God? That household, as we delight to remember on this Easter Sunday, has a living Head. It has not merely the memory of a crucified, but the presence of an ever-living Lord. And just in proportion as we are filled with His Spirit, as we emulate His example, as we do His commandments, do we grow worthy to be members of that great company which the Apostle here calls "the household of God," children of that one Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

> "Then draw we nearer day by day,
> Each to his brethren, all to God;
> Let the world take us as she may,
> We must not change our road."

PROFITLESS FOREBODING.*

"And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great."—MARK xvi. 3, 4.

IN these Gospels the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, and in every case the revelation is true to life. The thoughts are such as similar persons in our own day would have. In the passage before us we see a company of women on their way to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Him they loved so well. This is the very thing women would desire to do. This is the very form which a woman's love would take. It clings even more closely than does a man's to the form of those who have departed. A woman's thought lingers around the body. It prompts her to visit the grave, and leave there tokens of love. And these women, who were the last at the cross, are the first at the sepulchre, to render what service they can to Him whose body they expect to find therein. Very early in the morning, ere, as yet, the sun has fully risen, they are wending their way laden with spices—prepared in the weary time which had elapsed since they had seen their Lord expire on the cross—that they may anoint His lifeless body.

Then, too, it is altogether womanly that, fixed upon their sacred task, they should not think of the difficulties in their way. Woman is usually so intent upon the one task on

* Preached the Sunday after the death of Matthew Arnold.

which she is bent, that she sees it alone. Where a man looks all round, a woman looks at the one thing on which she is engaged, and to which all her energy is given. These devoted women have thought only of the body so precious to them, and how they could best do honour thereto. Their hands have been so busy gathering and preparing the spices, that they have not considered the difficulty of reaching the body of their Lord, secured within the rock-hewn tomb. It was not until they had almost reached the tomb that they begin to wonder how the huge stone by which Eastern graves were usually closed should be rolled away. Then they begin to ask, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?" Had they been *men*, they would probably have thought of this ere they started, and provided themselves with means for its removal. But here the woman's heedlessness of difficulty, as it so often does, serves them well; for, "looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great." It is all true to life—specially true to woman's life.

Woman's obliviousness to difficulty, whilst it sometimes leads her wrong, very often leads her right. It certainly often tends to balance the over-cautiousness of men. It is one illustration out of many which might be given that it is not good for either the man or the woman to be alone, that they were meant to be helpmeets of one another. The woman's hopefulness was meant to counteract the greater caution of the man, and the man's caution to steady the greater hopefulness of the woman. Woman is not, as the Poet Laureate says, "the lesser man," but the complement of man. It is foolish to question whether woman is the equal or the inferior of man. Their natures do not run along the same, but along different lines. Woman is strong where man is weak, and man is strong

where woman is weak. Man was not meant to be womanly, nor woman to be manly. In so far as this is the case they fail of their separate ideals. Each should move along their own line. Thus they will best fulfil the Divine purpose.

In the case before us, however, even these women anticipate a difficulty which did not exist. They expected to find a stone at the mouth of the tomb which would be beyond their power to roll aside. It is true they did not think of this till they had almost reached the sepulchre, but they *did* anticipate, though by very little, a difficulty which did not exist. If my conjecture be a true one, the male disciples would have thought of the difficulty long before, and might even have been prevented by it from setting out for the tomb. The women's eagerness to accomplish their task of love prevented this, but still, at the last moment, even they anticipated a difficulty which did not exist.

And is it not thus in most of our lives? Are we not all, more or less, given to anticipating difficulties which have no actual existence? In some degree it is thus even with women; in greater degree it is thus with men. It is true there are what we call sanguine natures, which are, to a large extent, oblivious of coming difficulties; but there are also cautious natures, ever imagining and preparing for difficulties which have no existence save in their own imaginations. And most of us fashion obstacles in our path which we shall never meet. Indeed, it has become almost a proverb that "the expected never happens." When we attempt to be prophets as to our own future, our prophecies nearly always fail of accomplishment. And half the trouble of our life comes from imagining difficulties. The advice of Sydney Smith, to "take short views of life," was very wise. Indeed, he had been forestalled in such advice by the ancient words of Holy Writ, which enjoin "the things

of a day in its day." In another place the wise and witty Canon of St. Paul's says, "Melancholy commonly flies to the future for its aliment, and it must be encountered by diminishing the range of our views." If the mind cannot be kept from looking into the future—and sometimes that is the case—an effort should be made to look on its sunnier side. A friend who spent many years in China tells me that the word for "to-morrow" in the language of that land really means "the bright day" or "the bright heaven," for day and heaven are used equally for day, and a day is a sun. And we do well to remember, that however deep the shadows which may fall on our future course, somewhere there is a sun, and therefore alongside those shadows some of his light. Half the trouble of many a life comes from such forecasting of the future. The student for the ministry leaving college to commence his work in a church asks himself, "How will it be possible to go on Sunday after Sunday speaking to the same people, and not come to an end of one's resources?" Up to that time it had taken days, and even weeks, to prepare a sermon; he wonders how ever he will be able to prepare two, or even three, each week as it comes round. But the same student, after twenty years of preaching—though his idea of what a sermon should be has been immensely raised, so that it would be quite impossible to preach one of his college sermons, which cost so much labour—instead of having said all that could be said, feels that more remains to be said than when he began. And sometimes now, in moments of depression, his forecast takes another direction, and he wonders what will happen when the physical power to do his work declines —when the almond tree begins to flourish, and desire to fail. But when that time is reached, in some way or other, that stone of difficulty will be found to have been

rolled away. And probably each of us could furnish illustrations of a like foreboding from his own experience. Each one of us, save perhaps natures that are very sanguine and hopeful, anticipates some heavy stone of difficulty too great for our strength to roll away. Indeed, I rather fancy that in our day, because of the keen competition, and the high tension of modern life, men and women have grown more anxious, more prone to forebodings about the future. Men of business often grow nervous as they think of some rivalry or some new invention, or some change of taste or fashion, which may rob them of their means of livelihood. Parents look round on their children, and their hearts grow anxious about their future. They wonder how they shall find openings for their boys, and provision for their girls. Sickness comes, and their hearts sink within them at the thought that they may not recover. They hear of the great crowds of men and women sunk into hopeless poverty, and wonder if such will at last be *their* lot. Many there are who anticipate death with alarm—who wonder what they will do in the swellings of Jordan, who are in bondage all their lifetime through fear of death. Thus the present is overcast with shadows from clouds which do not now fill the sky, but which they fancy one day may obscure the sun. Quaint old Montaigne says, "It is certainly a frenzy to go now and whip yourself, because it may so fall out that fortune may one day decree you a whipping, and to put on your furred gown at Midsummer because you will stand in need of it at Christmas." Thus the joy of summer is half banished by the thought of a winter which may never come. Thus trouble is doubled by anticipation. Thus imagination darkens rather than—as it should do—brightens our way. Thus we anxiously ask, "Who shall roll us away the stone?"—the stone too heavy for us to roll back,

when in the great majority of cases it *has* been rolled away ere we reach the sepulchre.

> "Be quiet! Take things as they come;
> Each hour will draw out some surprise.
> With blessing let the days go home;
> Thou shalt have thanks from evening skies."[1]

Seldom, however, are our forebodings realised. For if the thing we dreaded comes, we have unexpected strength to meet it; and so our relationship to it is altogether altered. I have spoken of the student's foreboding as to the preparations of sermons week after week. Well, the work has had to be done, but power to do it, far greater than he possessed at college, has grown up. The work has not exhausted, but rather increased his faculty. Continued draughts on the cruse of oil have not lessened, but rather augmented, its contents. And the more freely the cruse has been drawn on, the larger the supply which remained. The more one thinks of the Gospel, the larger its treasury appears. The more one considers human nature, the greater the variety of its needs. And so the preacher's horizon, instead of diminishing, is ever widening in extent.

It is not otherwise with the other forebodings to which I have referred. We look out on life, and we see men reaching an age when active work is no longer possible, but it is the rarest thing to see them left desolate. Men and women, grateful for their ministry, come to their aid. Children, mindful of all they owed to them in earlier days, are moved by grateful love to surround their declining years with comfort and help. Christian feeling will not allow the aged to suffer by neglect.

And so is it with those in business pursuits. If we subtract cases in which distress has come from extrava-

[1] Robert Earl Lytton.

gance, or speculation, or idleness, the instances are comparatively few in which dire poverty falls on the careful, the diligent, the straightforward. I have known parents with large families look forward with fear and trembling to the future of their children. But I have seen a few years elapse, and gradually, almost imperceptibly, one after another of those children had found a vocation, and become a comfort rather than an anxiety to their parents. During my ministry in this place I have noticed case after case in which this has happened or is happening. Sooner or later, instead of being troubled as to what they should do with their children, their trouble has rather been that the young birds have made nests of their own, and left the old one solitary. Let children be well trained in habits of industry and thrift, and there is little fear that they will fail to make their way in the world. Competition may be keen, England may be more crowded than in former days, but there is still space and work for the trustworthy and diligent. Fortunes may be harder to make—that is no great misfortune ; but, for those who will work, there is still space and opportunity, if not in this, in other lands not so thickly peopled as our own. And as to the fear of death, which so haunts and troubles many a life, it is a spectre with no real existence. Indeed, where it is most dreaded it is usually least felt. I have stood by many a death-bed, and I say, without any hesitation, that in the great majority of cases at eventide there has been light. In many a case the spirit has been ready and even wishful to depart.

Striking illustration of this has been furnished by the lamented death of Matthew Arnold. If we may judge from his poems, he feared the weakness and failure of power which often comes with old age, and recoiled from the sad accompaniments of the chamber of death. Some

of you may remember his poem on "Growing Old," which closes with the following verses :—

"It is to spend long days,
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

"It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

"It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost,
Which blamed the living man."

Whilst in another poem—"A Wish"—these words occur, which evidently embodied his fear concerning his last days :—

"Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come and gape and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All which makes death a hideous show!

"Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head, and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

"Nor fetch, to take the accustomed toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother, doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

"The future and its viewless things—
That undiscovered mystery,
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he."

If these poems express, as they seem to do, forebodings of his own, they were both unrealised. He never knew

the weakness, the slowly dying feeling of old age, but passed, in the fulness of his power, to that hidden but larger life behind the veil. He knew nothing of the sick-room and its painful accompaniments, but in the open air, beneath the over-arching sky, passed in a moment from our midst.

It would have been well if he had listened to the wise advice of John Milton :—

> "Why need a man foretell his date of grief,
> And run to meet what he would most avoid?"

Or to that of the grandmother in one of Lord Lytton's stories, who, when asked by a child, in the midst of happiness, "It cannot last, can it?" replies, "'Tis no use in this life, my dear—no use at all disturbing present happiness by asking, Can it last? To-day is man's; to-morrow is his Maker's."

When Dr. Bushnell lay a-dying, to the inquiry, "But how do you feel about it, Doctor?" he replied, "I can hardly tell; but as for this dying, about which we have always been so much exercised, I have come to think there isn't much in it." In the night his wife asked him how death looked to him. "Very much like going into another room," was his answer. When the text was repeated to him, "The good and acceptable and perfect will of God," he replied, "Yes, and accepted."

I do not say that every stone will be found to have been rolled away; but I do say that the stone which we feared the most will be found to have been removed. Some stone may be there, but not the one which most we dreaded. And, therefore, we may well put aside our foreboding, for it is not likely to be realised. By such foreboding, indeed, we fly in the face of the Divine order for our life; for if God had meant us to be ever looking on

to the future, He would have revealed it, so that we should *see*, and not *imagine*, what is in store for us. But He has *not* done this, but the very reverse. He has drawn a curtain between us and the future, even between us and the morrow, which no effort of ours can lift or push aside. We may *imagine* what is behind that curtain, but that is all we can do; and our imagining seldom corresponds to the reality. The future rarely, if ever, brings us what we expected. And so our vain expectations often lead us to put on armour against phantom foes, and preparing to fight these, we are not rightly armed against the foes which will actually oppose our course. Seneca well says, "He grieves more than need be who begins to grieve before he needs." And our foreboding will not fit us to roll away the stone, whatever it may be; nay, it will rather chill our hearts and weaken our arm. No strength will come from anxious thought. That will only rob us of our power. By all means let us make all possible preparation for the future. There is room for prudence, forethought, care; these are parts of our duty; these may remove many a stone out of the way; but for *anxious foreboding* there is *no* place. That will roll no stone from our path; that will neither strengthen us for the present nor arm us for the future; that will rather cloud the present and darken the future, when it comes. Nay, more, it will discourage those who are about us—our children, our co-workers—and unfit them for the battle of life. To do their work aright they need courage and hopefulness, and these will be checked by our forebodings. But, on the other hand, our trustful courage will impart itself to them, and nerve them for the work of their life.

And such trustfulness should be nourished by our Christian faith, which is the enemy of foreboding. Sydney Smith once said, "Some very excellent people tell you

they dare not hope. To me it seems much more impious to despair." Christ's words are the true panacea for such anxiety. He was ever urging men to learn from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air to trust in God, assuring them that over anxiety can do nothing for us, that it can neither add to our stature nor make one hair white or black. If we would overcome such anxiety, let us keep in His quiet and rest-giving company, and there we shall learn that "the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment." He will teach us the true secret of a blessed life. Mrs. Browning caught the very spirit of Christ when she said—

> "I think we are too ready with complaint
> In this fair world of God's.
> Be comforted!
> And like a cheerful traveller take the road,
> Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
> Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
> To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
> Because the way is short, I thank Thee, God."

A wise rule of life is to get all the good, ay, and all the *happiness*, we can out of life *as it passes*. We are saved by hope, but hope itself may be so strong as to force our vision too much to the future, and thus rob us of the full measure of the joy of the present; just as the child on a journey, ever asking, "Are we nearly there?" loses the beauty of the country through which he is passing. Life is not long enough to let slip the present. We should take the days as they come, and get as much work and as much happiness out of them as we can. Yes, happiness; for it is possible to be too intent on work. I should not like to see my children caring *only* for *work;* I would have them get some happiness out of their life, and I cannot believe that the Great Father sent us here to work and toil *all our days*. The happier men are, the better

He is pleased. And happiness arises chiefly by catching its opportunities as they arise, not by forming ideal conditions under which alone we fancy that we can be happy. Sir John Lubbock not long ago gave the following excellent advice to working men:—

"Few of us make our lives as bright and happy as we might. We are still in a comparatively early stage of human development, and we have not yet realised to the full that subordination of ourselves which is requisite to the full sympathy with others, but we are beginning to grasp that selfish pursuit of our own aims and our own happiness is not the way to secure them. Books help us to look, in George Eliot's words, 'on other lives besides our own.' It is well for every one to see what are the troubles of others, and how they are borne; to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small, selfish desires; to care for what is best in thought and action—something that is good apart from the accident of our own lot. If we succeed in this, we are sure to have happy and useful lives, whatever and wherever we may be. Our lives, in fact, are what we ourselves make them. To eat and drink and sleep and work is not to live. We waste our time over things of no importance; we fret over trifles; we are over-anxious, and conjure up dangers and grievances which either exist only in our own diseased imaginations, or at any rate are much less important than they seem. It is as true now as it was in the time of David that man 'disquieteth himself in vain.' This world of ours is very beautiful if we would only enjoy it in peace. There is, we know, a 'peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' and there is also a peace of Nature. The very worst troubles of life are the anxieties and perplexities with which we torment ourselves, and most of which are quite unnecessary. As

regards the material requirements of life, though all cannot expect to be rich, industry and perseverance rarely fail to secure a competence. We all, moreover, have some leisure, and the less we have, the more reason that we should employ that little well. Ernest Rhys well says of a student's chamber—

> "'Strange things pass nightly in this little room,
> All dreary as it looks by light of day;
> Enchantment reigns here when at evening play
> Red firelight glimpses through the pallid gloom.'"

Dr. Phillips Brooks has well said, "There is no better test of men's progress than this advancing power to do without the things which used to be essential to their lives. As we climb a high mountain, we must keep our footing strong upon one ledge until we have fastened ourselves strongly on the next. Then we may let the lower foothold go. The lives of men who have been always growing are strewed along their whole course with the things they have learned to do without." And a great philosopher has said, "I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them." This is one of the chief lessons which Christ taught; could we but really learn it, half our forebodings would flee away. St. Paul learnt it, and so he could say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Let us seek to learn it, and then our hearts will not be vexed by asking, "Who shall roll away the stone?" for we shall know that before we reach the sepulchre, the stone, great as it is, will have been rolled away.

LOVING TRUTHFULNESS.

"Speaking truth in love."—EPHES. iv. 15.

RENDERED literally, though not elegantly or in quite good English, this passage should read, "Truthing t in love." Perhaps some day we may allow the noun "truth" to be turned into a verb, and then we might translate St. Paul's words into their equivalent, and say, "Truthing it in love." We narrow his meaning a little by saying, "*Speaking* the truth in love," since we may communicate by other means than speech. Our common proverb reminds us that actions *speak* louder than words. We may speak by our looks, by the movement of our bodies, and paradoxical as it may seem, even by our silence. To allow an error, a scandal, a libel to be uttered in our hearing without correction, and if needs be reproof, is to be a consenting party thereto, and to share in its guilt. By "truthing it" St. Paul means, I think, always giving right impressions, always being loyal to what we believe to be true, by word, by look, by act, by bearing,—striving always (to use Archbishop Whately's distinction) not to have truth on our side, but to be on the side of truth. There is a vast difference between these two attitudes of mind. This precept summons us to a supreme loyalty to truth—that we should ever, to use our Lord's phrase, "be of the truth."

"Let us be true; this is the highest maxim of art and

of life, the secret of eloquence and of virtue, and of all moral authority." *

Now, that looks very easy, but it is in reality most difficult. There is some foundation for Mr. Ruskin's declaration that "speaking truth is like writing fair, and comes only by practice. It is less a matter of will than of habit." It is probably a matter of the will first, which gradually grows into a habit. To attain to such truthfulness is to get very near perfection of character, as St. James discerned when he declared that "if any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." But this is hard to attain, since there are so many influences which draw us away from such supreme loyalty to truth. I will mention some of these, since to know may enable us to be on our guard against them.

And first, strange as it may seem, modesty may turn us from being quite truthful. Modesty may seem to call us in one direction, and truth in quite another one. To avoid Scylla it may seem impossible not to fall into Charybdis. To be reckoned quite frank and truthful we may have to run the risk of being considered conceited. That is rather a difficult dilemma to escape. Some people are so afraid of being esteemed proud that they would rather fail in fealty to what seems to them to be true, and which therefore to them *is* the truth. You say to a parent, "That child of yours is very clever." The parent knows this to be the case, but is afraid to agree with you, since it will seem like parental fondness or partiality to do so, and therefore replies, "Oh, he is about the average." You say to one engaged in business, "You have been a very successful man." He knows he has, but he lacks the courage to say what he thinks, and replies, "Well, I may seem to have been, but I have not been so successful as you imagine."

* "Journal Intime" of Henri Frédéric Amiel, p. 47.

People are wonderfully modest in their speech about business or money. How rare it is for a man to acknowledge that he has made money, or that his business is good! At all events, in a direct way. A friend of mine once called on a tradesman and offered him some goods. He replied, "Oh, business is too bad for me to buy." Only a few minutes afterwards this same man said, "I am so busy that I can't spare you any more time." Some men are as afraid of acknowledging that their business is good or that they are making money as others are of being considered saints. Indeed, there are some subjects that people think they may talk about with little care for accuracy. They fail to see that such talk offends against the rule of truth. I cannot see that the subject about which we speak frees us from the obligation to be as accurate and truthful as possible. Is it so very terrible to be considered successful in business, or that we have been able to make good profits, or that we have been enabled to reach a measure of success in any work? When we are in our right mind we shall feel that it was not we, but the grace or strength of God in us, that enabled us to do what we may have done. At all events, it is surely our duty to be loyal to what seems to us to be true.

When Dr. John Pulsford's "Morgenrothe" appeared some one said to him, "That is a very remarkable book," to which, conscious that it contained a message given to him to deliver, he replied, "Sir, it *is* a remarkable book."

As John Ruskin says: "All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually *know* that they are right in them; only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo knows he can build a good dome at Florence; Albert Durer writes calmly to one who has found fault with his work, 'It cannot be better

done;' Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else; only they do not expect their fellow-men, therefore, to fall down and worship them. They have a curious undersense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them—that they could not do or be anything else than God made them, and they see something Divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."

In this sense "egotism is true modesty."

Then the love of gossip is almost sure to turn the mind away from truth. Those infected by this spirit are very seldom accurate in their reports. They become fond of telling startling stories, and often to render them so they lay on the colours very heavily. The reward they seek is astonishment in their hearers, and if the plain, unvarnished story they have heard does not produce such astonishment, their brush soon adds colour to the picture. They do not *mean* to be untruthful, but their craving for excitement often renders them so. Gossip soon degenerates into slander. And the love which should always mark our speech soon withers in the gossip's heart, and often as much harm is done as by the assassin's steel.

Then our interest, or what we fancy so, sometimes indisposes us to be quite true. We see that it will stand in the way of our business, of our prospects in life, or some scheme that we have in hand. It is not easy for the trader to describe accurately the goods he has to sell, or one who wishes to let a house to include its drawbacks in his description, or for a man to be quite fair to his rival, whether it be in trade, or art, or literature, or love. All these put a severe strain upon our loyalty to truth.*

* I venture here to utter a protest against a form of untruthfulness which has of late grown to great dimensions. I refer to the unblushing

Then, too, inclination makes it difficult to be quite true. Inclination plays a large part in forming and fixing the views we hold. It tends to blind us to the things against, and to make us very keen in noting all that favours, the course to which we are inclined. Many of our so-called opinions are little more than apologies for our own practices or tastes. It must be very hard for a State Churchman, especially if he be the holder of a snug deanery or a cosy rectory, to be quite fair to the ideas of a spiritual kingdom set forth by the advocates of a Free Church. I rather suspect that the man who is fond of his glass of wine must find it difficult to give full weight to the argument for abstinence ; whilst, on the other hand, the man possessed with convictions of the necessity of abstinence will hardly estimate fairly the argument for moderation. If we could get at the heart of many of our opinions we should find inclination playing a large part. And one of the things most hard to do is to eliminate inclination in the formation of our opinions, so as to look at facts and truths with unbiassed judgment. If we were quite honest, we should say about a good many courses for which we argue, "Well, you know, I like them;" or, as Dr. Ralph Wardlaw, when his friend Dr. John Brown argued against his habit of fishing, replied, "Well, I can't answer you ; but fish I must, and shall."

Then, again, it is difficult to be loyal to truth if the atmosphere in which we are found be uncongenial. It is easy enough

way in which many persons whilst travelling on railways, to secure plenty of space for themselves, will not only spread out their luggage to give the impression that all the seats have been taken, but will even *say* that they have been engaged. On many occasions I have been told this of carriage after carriage, until in sheer desperation, and fear that the train would leave me behind, I have forced my way into a carriage said to be full, and when the train started found how utterly untrue the statements made have been. It has then been curious, if it were not so sad, to watch the shamefaced looks of the deceivers.

when we are in the midst of those holding like opinions to our own, but it is a very different matter when all are against us. It is difficult to be loyal to Liberalism in the midst of Conservative circles, or to Conservatism surrounded by Radicals—to be true to our religious convictions in a sceptical circle, or for the sceptic to be true to his in a religious one. These are the seasons which test a man's courage and fidelity. I do not mean that it is necessary to obtrude our views or assert our position—that often only leads to strife; but if points of controversy be raised we should let it be clearly known where we stand, and not, by silence or seeming assent, deny our faith, whether it be in relation to politics or religion. Good manners may demand that we should, if possible, avoid controversy; but if controversy arise through no movement of ours, then truth demands that we should be loyal. There are those whose ambition seems to be all things to all men—to please everybody. Such men seem to me to be nothing better than chameleons, which take their colour from their surroundings. That may be all very well for chameleons, but it is not well for men, whose end should be not to please, but to be true. St. Paul went as far as any man should in adapting himself to circumstances; but he felt that there was a point beyond which he dared not go, when he said, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Against this we need to be on our guard, especially in an age like ours, disposed to regard truth as beyond the attainment of men. Pure, unadulterated truth may be; here on earth our powers may not be adequate to the vision of absolute truth—it might blind us by its brightness. We may be able only to "see through a glass, darkly," but that is no reason why we should not be loyal to the truth to which we have attained. One of the bitter fruits of the Agnostic temper of our time is that,

fearing to be positive, men become indifferent; fearing to say they know, they become hesitating so that they do not tread life's way with a firm step. Over-positiveness may have been an evil in the past; over-hesitation is the danger into which *we* are in peril of falling. It is almost better to hold even a false idea with tenacity than to be afraid to hold anything firmly because there may be some element of error therein. Man in his physical frame is not an invertebrate animal, and in his spiritual nature there ought to be a backbone of conviction, so that he may walk erect through life. Let that be wanting, and the vigour of his manhood is lost. To be undetermined in opinion in politics or in religion is the sign of weakness. A man should fight his way to an assured position, proving all things; he should not be satisfied till he has found and can hold fast that which he has proved to be good. And having fought his doubt and gathered strength, he should be ready to confess, and, if need be, defend his faith. Thomas Carlyle says of his father, "He was one of those few men that could believe and know as well as inquire and be of opinion." * It is by such men that the progress of the world has been secured—not by your hesitating tremblers, afraid to say *they know* because there may be some hidden particle of error in their belief. These are always in the wake of the army—afraid to move lest they should be surprised by the foe. Pilates who ask and are ever asking "What is truth?" afraid to condemn or release the Christ, always trying to find some *via media*, end by crucifying the Truth. There are such men now. In the political world they see only the errors of politicians, and do nothing to bring in a better day. In the religious realm, they see only the mistakes of the Churches, and help none to a better course. No Church is accurate enough in

* "Reminiscences," i. 24

doctrine for such, and they wander about neither contributing to nor helping the work of any. To wait till we can get truth without any admixture of error, or a Church without a flaw, or a state with a perfect government, is folly. We might as well say we will not dwell on the earth, for it is not perfect; it has its drawbacks. All that we can do is to get as near truth as possible, and then be loyal to our clearest convictions. Resolve to plant your foot somewhere, and then stand firm, ready to hold fast, if need be to witness to and even suffer for, the truth you have reached.

But then all this, the Apostle says, must be done in love. We are not to carry truth about as a drawn sword, ready to smite those who differ from us. To witness is not, of necessity, to fight. To be loyal to truth need not make us dogmatic or self-assertive. The temper in which we hold truth is as important as the truth itself. Truth is prejudiced by a sour or assertive temper in the man who holds it. Love is more than orthodoxy. A gracious spirit is more than correctness of opinion. It is better to be a sceptic with a loving heart than a believer with an unloving one. The devils, we are told, believe and tremble. A faith that works by love is the only faith which Christ acknowledges. Unloving believers do more harm than even sceptics. Indeed, I question very much whether there can be such a thing as an unloving believer in Christ. There may be in creeds or confessions, but a man who believes in Christ will catch of His loving spirit, and be transformed to His image. "Truthing it *in love;*" that is the only right way of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The dogmatic, pugnacious, assertive way in which men have contended for Christianity has defeated its own purpose. A surgeon might as well take a hatchet to amputate a limb; he would get off the

limb, but he would destroy the life of his patient. And to bear witness for Christian truth in an unloving way is quite as foolish, since Christianity is a spirit even more than a doctrine. Its doctrine is of little use save as it creates that Christian temper and spirit which the Apostle sets forth in detail as meekness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, and declares that against such there is no law. One who had been looking at a portrait by a great painter remarked, "It is certainly like, but it is much better-looking;" to which the painter replied, "It is the truth told lovingly." And the misfortune of the past has been that men have tried to propagate Christianity in an unchristian spirit—they have fought for it with carnal weapons, and their warfare has been waged with all manner of uncharitableness. Let us ever seek to speak the truth, but let us seek with equal, if not with greater earnestness, to speak that truth in love, and then, though men may not be convinced by our arguments, they will be won by our spirit to cry, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you."

ACCEPTABLE WORDS.

"Let the words of my mouth . . . be acceptable in Thy sight."—PSALM xix. 14.

THE whole verse from which these words are taken forms a comprehensive prayer for a *life* acceptable to God. When both the meditations of the heart and the words of the mouth are acceptable, of necessity the *life* must be so. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Need we therefore pray for both acceptable thoughts and acceptable words? Some may say, 'Get the prayer answered about the heart, and the mouth will give expression to the heart. Quicken right feeling, and right words will follow. Get right thoughts, and you will of necessity utter acceptable words. Purify the fountain, and the waters will flow forth pure and free.' And yet a little thought will show us that the prayer about *our words* is not an unnecessary one. Meditation, it is true, is only unuttered speech. Even our *thoughts* must be clothed upon with words, though they may be unuttered. We think in words. Complete mastery of a strange language is attained only when we are able to think in it. There is little, if any, thought apart from words. So that when we pray for acceptable meditations, we do thereby pray for acceptable, though they may be *unspoken*, words. And yet, when uttered, words have a separate existence, and most powerfully affect the thoughts of our minds. Language has a reflex influence: spoken words crystallise

thought; utterance gives thought substance and form; thought is revealed in speech, but speech reacts upon thought. There is ample scope, therefore, for the double prayer, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."

It is not uncommon to find men disposed to undervalue speech. The old proverb, "Actions speak louder than words," which, rightly applied, has much truth in it, is often grossly misapplied. It is so when a distinction is drawn between the men of speech and the men of action, to the detriment of the former. We need to remind ourselves that sometimes speech itself is the mightiest action. In our Houses of Legislature few indeed are the men who carry out by actual labour the great measures passed therein. Speech is the chief portion of their duty. When the history of our time comes to be written, it will be found that some of the most powerful forces therein were these *words* which some would esteem so lightly.

In many a case speech *is* action. Luther's words have been called "half battles." His work lay chiefly in the noble, fearless words which fell from his lips.

We do not realise so fully as we should the large place which words fill, and the great influence for good or evil, for joy or sorrow, they exert in life. In them the chief commerce of life consists, for they are our only means of definite communication with one another. And yet we are often so careless about them. We count out our *coins* most carefully; but we are not so careful about our *words*—the coins of feeling and thought. St. James affirmed that "if any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." "Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips," and so lost the high privilege of conducting Israel into the land of promise.

"One market-day in Oxford, when the town was much crowded with roughs, and the 'Town' and 'Gown' element were apt to come into collision, John Henry Newman was walking past All Saints' Church, in the line of march of a furiously drunken butcher, who came up foul-mouthed and blasphemous. When they were near together, Newman stood in his path. An undergraduate—a muscular fellow, the stroke of his college boat—expecting violence, came close behind the butcher, and was just making ready to fell him, when he saw the man stop short; Newman was speaking to him. Very quietly he said, 'My friend, if you thought of the meaning of your words, you would not say them.' The savage was tamed on the spot; he touched his hat, turned round, and went back."*

That reproof applies to many of us. If we thought of the meaning of our words, some of them would not be spoken; but often we speak first, and think afterwards; we allow the tongue to go before the reason or the conscience. Harm is oftener wrought by want of thought than want of heart. To think before we speak may make us a little slow in speech, but then our words would be worth hearing, which is more than can always be said of those of voluble folk. There is a story told of a visit paid by Tennyson to Carlyle, that they sat together the whole evening without a single word being spoken. When Tennyson rose to go, Carlyle accompanied him to the door, and exclaimed as they parted, "What a good time we have had! come again soon." Well, even that was better than mere gossip, better, perhaps, than Coleridge's volubility. He was once asked by a friend, "Did you ever hear me preach?" "I never heard you do anything else," was the prompt reply. Too *few* are better than too *many* words; for where there are too *many* there is

* Father Lockhart.

likely to be some unadvised speech. We are oftener sorry for our speech than for our silence.

I have sometimes wished that it were possible to trace the course of some spoken word, that we could follow its silent, mystic, wondrous influence through all the tangled course of human thought, through all the devious way of human life, seeing it as God sees it, from the moment of utterance down to the end of time! Imagine, if you can, the history of some of the unspeakably precious words of Christ! Take, for example, that great utterance which in every tone seems charged with holy peace and heavenly calm, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." How it has graven itself upon human hearts! How it has echoed and re-echoed in weary spirits! How it has fallen like cooling dew upon fevered brains! How it has risen like some star of hope in the night of darkness! How it has been like a tender hand leading the wanderer on his weary way!

But then I have wished that the course of some *evil* word could be opened before us; a word uttered against the Most High God! a word of profanity or uncleanness. What a terrible way it would lead us! how blighting its course! Longfellow has just a hint of this far-reaching influence of words in his well-known little song—

"I shot an arrow into the air;
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

"I breathed a song into the air;
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong
That it can follow the flight of song?

"Long—long afterwards, in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke,
And the song from beginning to end
I found again in the heart of a friend."

If a true vision of the course and influence of words were granted us, we should utter with new meaning and earnestness the prayer of the Psalmist, "Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord!"

We will consider some of the essentials of acceptable words.

I. *They must be truthful words.*

I do not mean by this merely that we must not break the ninth Commandment—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Far more than this is essential to entire truthfulness—that requires our words to be in harmony with our thought. We all know how the camera receives with perfect accuracy an impression of the form placed before it. One may quarrel with an artist working with brush and colours. He may say here or there is little resemblance between the original and the picture. He cannot thus complain in reference to the work done by the pencil of the sun. That depicts whatever is put before it. And our speech should be thus photographic of our thought. Speech should be simply uttered thought. There are, I know, *feelings* which reach beyond the capacity of language—which *no words* can express. Our Poet Laureate is not the only one obliged to declare—

"I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the *grief* I feel;
For words, like nature, half reveal,
And half conceal the soul within."

But his reference is to *feeling*, not *thought*. Language may not be equal to the full expression of *feeling*, but save in the most exceptional cases, it *is* adequate to the

expression of *thought*. When people say, "I cannot express what I mean," it is because they do not know clearly what they mean—their thought is hazy and indistinct. Clear thought soon reaches out to clear expression.

Speech is the clothing of thought, and, like clothing, should fit. Why do we speak? To give expression to our sentiments or feelings or thoughts. Surely, therefore, there should be harmony between them. I know full well that this is the merest truism. No argument is needed to enforce it. And yet how far we are from acting on the principle! How should we tremble if those hearing our words at the same time saw our thoughts! Need I say that there is ONE who at the same moment hears our words and reads our thoughts? What violent contrasts Heaven must witness between them! What strange contradictions between words and feelings! "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Let us strive to be true. Better far to be silent than false. The hiding-place of silence may always be ours.

Such a rule would exclude—

(*a*) *All exaggerated speech.* It is to be feared that this is a special failing of our own day. The sobriety which characterised the speech of our Puritan ancestors, and which still marks one of the sects of our time, has well-nigh departed. Our conversation is full of exaggerated phrases. Strong, solemn, earnest words are applied to trivial things. Presently we shall have no serious words, unmarred by their associations. The "tall talk" of the Western world has come across the waters, has been taken up by the fast and fashionable circles of our day—circles so receptive of all that is evil, so hardened against the beautiful and true; and is gradually passing into our common speech, tarnishing our noble English tongue, and

robbing it of simplicity and vigour. I will give but one instance out of a great number. In what strange connections the word "awful" is found! How hideous it is to hear a thing described as "awfully jolly" by up-grown men and women! For the sake of our noble mother tongue, if for no higher motive, let us refrain from the use of such *unacceptable words.*

But there are exaggerations not merely of expression, but of thought and expression combined. It is proverbial how rapidly reports as to events and persons enlarge, and so great is the change wrought in them, that they are unrecognised even by their authors. In some cases this is intentional. There is a settled purpose to make the report more striking in order to produce an effect. There are persons so impatient of a plain recital, that they long to give it warmth and colour. Just as an artist longs to fill in the outline upon the easel, so in this sensational age the story is allowed but a short life in its simple beauty, but is speedily made to glow with unnatural hues.

In other cases the same effect is *unconsciously* produced. There is no *intent* to deceive, but so lively are the imaginations of some, that unconsciously they add intensity and vividness to the picture they describe. Rarely do we get, either from the lip or the press, "a round, unvarnished tale." Such are not "acceptable words."

(*b*) *All unreal words.* An illustration or two will be better than any description. For example: A mistress instructs her servants, should visitors call at a certain time, or should certain persons call at any time, to say "she is not at home." This is not using acceptable words, and, let me add, she is teaching her servants methods of deception which, sooner or later, they will apply in ways that will not be pleasant to herself. You call at a friend's

house. It is near the time of one of the ordinary meals. You are invited to remain; you really wish, and, it may be, came *intending* to, and *do* remain; and yet you make a multitude of excuses for not remaining. Such are not acceptable words. An article is offered for sale. The intending purchaser asks, "Is it the best? Is it of a certain kind?" The seller, knowing full well the meaning of the purchaser, replies in the affirmative, knowing also full well that it is not the best, that it is not of the kind desired, but only the best he possesses—the nearest he has in stock to the kind required. Such words do not harmonise with the knowledge possessed by the seller, and are therefore not "acceptable words."

(*c*) *All flattering words.* This does not preclude honest praise, for in this world, where nothing good is accomplished without thought and toil, words of *honest* commendation are of the greatest value. They often prove a stimulus and incentive to further effort. There are men who, upon principle, refrain from all commendation; it is never heard from their lips by their children, their co-workers, their friends. Thus they withhold that which would often prove a rousing, healthful influence, and would lead on to nobler efforts. Surely if there be promised to the faithful, in spite of all their imperfections and failures, the "Well done!" of the Master, we may give a like "Well done!" to our brethren striving to do true and faithful work. If the story of many a noble worker were fully told, it would show that some true word of praise had formed the starting-point of his career. But then they must be *honest words.* Let them be words of flattery, and they will prove to be only pernicious. There are men in whom the habit of flattering has become a second nature. Their vocabulary of admiration is extended, and in constant use. Surely we have all known

men whose praise can never be safely accepted. Let us be true, and then no flattering word will ever pass our lips. Our words of praise will then have a new meaning, because they will be known to be sincere.

II. *They must be pure words.* I do not mean by this that we should only refrain from the utterance of words that are actually impure, but that we should avoid in our speech every suggestion of the unclean. *Suggestion* is often more harmful even than explicit words. What our French neighbours call "double entendre" is the most mischievous in its influence. The bold realism of M. Zola may be less harmful than the veiled impurity of some of our English novelists. The former may disgust by its outspokenness; the latter often first charms, and then injures by the way in which evil is delicately clothed in fair words. We may well test our speech by asking whether we should dare to utter it before the pure-minded—a mother or a sister.

The evil lies chiefly, if not entirely, in men's speech one with another. When the other sex are absent men are tempted to narrate stories or make jokes in which elements of impurity are present. The talk that goes on in places where *only men* gather, as in fashionable and even literary clubs, is enough to make the angels weep. Such conversation has often corrupted the mind and led to the ruin of many a youth. Any words that would be silenced by the entrance of a pure-minded woman are evil, and should never be spoken.

III. *They must be marked by charity.* This essential to acceptable words is well characterised by St. Paul as thinking no evil, rejoicing not in iniquity, but rejoicing in the truth. There *are* men who have an instinctive delight in depicting evil, as vultures have for the carrion on which they feed. Over a brother's fault they

gather with gloating eye and cruel heart. Carping, detracting words are ever upon their lips. To them every noble purpose has some evil root. They deem all hearts are moved by their own selfish motives. They cast their own dark shadow over every fair and noble scene.

This is an evil spirit—yea, it belongs to *the* very spirit of evil. In the pages of the Old Testament there are two great scenes in which the foe of man and God is revealed, and in both his words are filled with this spirit. In the garden of man's innocency the tempter appears with these insinuations against the Most High God: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Slanderous words, not shrinking from attributing jealousy to the Eternal Father! The same spirit of evil appears in the days of Job. Jehovah asks, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God? and escheweth evil?" What reply has the tempter to this Divine eulogium? "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Slanderous words, not shrinking from attributing low, selfish motives to a good man's action!

Evil ought so to grieve our hearts as to make it impossible for us to blazon it abroad. Truth and goodness ought to be so attractive as to lead us to speak of them with delight and joy.

We do not check the progress of evil by publishing abroad our brethren's failings and sins. Do we not rather spread the evil? It is said that public executions witnessed by teeming myriads of men have led to the perpetration of many a murderous deed. And we are told by those competent to form an opinion that the great

publicity now given to deeds of darkness, far from checking such deeds, often becomes a positive incitement thereto.

Oh that we had greater tenderness for sinful, wandering souls! "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Let us remember how, in all our lives, good and evil are mingled. Let us not remember the evil, nor spread it abroad, and thus close the door of hope against hearts burdened with their sins. Let us strive to be like Him who, though of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet "casts our sins behind His back."

IV. *They must not be passionate words.* It is very hard to restrain such words when, as is sometimes the case, we are unjustly accused, or when evil motives are attributed to our sincere action. Even Moses could not restrain such words when, at Meribah, the people brought against him irritating and unjust accusations. St. Paul felt this difficulty when he said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," implying that with some men that was not always possible. And in another place he asks the Thessalonians to pray for him, that he "may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith," that is, faith in their fellow-men—they are always suspecting motives, always on the look out for selfish aims. I suspect such persons measure other people's corn by their own bushel—they read their own inner motives into other people's actions. Under such circumstances, it is very hard to restrain passionate words. Anger is perhaps allowable, but not passion, and the words in which it finds expression.

For when we lose self-mastery we allow the worse rather than the better self to mount the throne and wield the

sceptre of our life, we allow the tiger in us rather than the man to rule; whereas we should only allow the regenerated man—the Christ-touched man—to move and speak.

The tongue is but an instrument whose discord or harmony is determined from a deeper source. The tongue does but frame and express the thoughts of the mind or the feelings of the heart. "But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man," said our Lord. Though this is so, the tongue needs watching and checking. An Eastern proverb tells us that the word a man keeps unspoken is his *servant:* the word he utters is his *master.* If we can only keep silence or be guarded in our speech, the passion within us may die down, or, at all events, will not hurt others. But let out, unlike steam, it does not exhaust, but rather recuperates itself. It is like flame, which, reaching out to the air, burns all the fiercer. Speech often aggravates instead of exhausting passion, giving it also currency and wider effect. Nor can we recall its effects. It wounds, and though by confession and sorrow we may to some extent heal the wound, the scar remains. How much some of us would give to recall passionate, hastily spoken, ill-advised words! As Will Carleton, in his homely but incisive style, says :—

> "Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;
> You can't do that way when you're flying words.
> 'Careful with fire' is good advice, we know;
> 'Careful with words' is ten times doubly so.
> Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead;
> But God Himself can't kill them when they're said."

If in our speech we would only consider how our words will affect those to whom they are spoken—if we would try to hear them, as it were, with *their* ears, and consider how they will affect *their* hearts, there would not be much passionate or unadvised speech; certainly there would be

few spirits wounded or lives embittered by the words of our lips. For spirits *are* wounded, lives *are* embittered by words. Evil thoughts are bad, but then they do not hurt others, only ourselves; but evil words carry the evil through the ear to the hearts and lives of others. As Adelaide Procter says:—

"Yet on the dull silence breaking,
With a lightning-flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation
On its blighting wing, I heard;
Earth can forge no keener weapon,
Dealing surer death and pain,
And the cruel echo answered,
'Through long years again.'

"I have known a spirit calmer
Than the calmest lake, and clear
As the heaven that gazed upon it,
With no wave of hope or fear.
But a storm had swept across it,
And its deepest depths were stirred,
Never, never more to slumber,
Only by a word!

"Words are mighty, words are living
Serpents with their venomous stings,
Or bright angels crowding round us
With Heaven's light upon their wings.
Every word has its own spirit,
True or false, that never dies;
Every word man's lips have uttered
Echoes in God's skies."

V. *They must be godly words.* I do not mean by this that our speech should be full of words about God, that it should be interlarded with Scripture, as was the speech of our Puritan ancestors. There *are* times and seasons when we may calmly and earnestly speak about the highest matters. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" But nothing is so likely to degenerate into mere cant as constant reference to high themes. Most delicately must you touch the grape newly taken from the vine, or

its lovely bloom will be lost past all recovery. No gardener's skill, no painter's brush, can bring it back. Thus may the freshness, the sanctity, the beauty of spiritual things be lost. Too frequently upon the lip, they will grow to be less felt within the heart. The lip may starve rather than nourish the heart.

There are circles in which the most sacred themes are talked of in the most glib manner, and sung about with trifling minds. Thus their sacred beauty is defiled. We need to remember the caution of Aubrey de Vere—

> "Ye who would build the churches of the Lord,
> See that ye make the western portals low:
> Let no one enter who disdains to bow.
> High truths profanely gazed at, unadored,
> Will be abused at first, at last abhorred."

But still earthly speech may be seasoned with godly thoughts. Earthly things may be seen in a heavenly light. We plead for a godly *spirit* rather than godly words, for the *spirit* of heaven rather than the *language* of heaven. Without any reference to the scholar's lore, the scholar *is* *felt* in all his writing and in all his speech. Without proclaiming his ancestry, you *feel* the gentleman in all his ways. And thus the spirit of the Christian may be seen. Better far is it to be known as a Christian by our spirit than by our words, by the bearing of our life than by the profession we make. It was said of Edmund Burke that you could not take shelter beneath the same tree with him, from a passing storm, without feeling that he was no common man. Surely the presence and power of the high things of our holy faith will, even without declarations and professions, make men feel that we have been in the Holiest Company, and, in some measure, transformed to its likeness. And then, whether we speak or are silent, it will be felt that we have been with Jesus and learnt of Him.

ANGER WITHOUT SIN.

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath."
—EPHES. iv. 26.

HAS anger, then, a place in the Christian character? You say, 'We thought it one of the feelings to be overcome or cast out from the heart. Why, a few verses later the Apostle includes it among the things to be put away, the same word being used in both instances—in the text the verb, and in the later passage the noun from which it sprang. Is there, then, a place for anger in a saintly life?' Certainly. There may be an anger without sin.

And that suggests a very important idea which has too often been lost sight of—namely, that Christianity was meant not to overthrow, but to regulate each faculty of our nature. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. That holds good not only of the law, concerning which it was spoken, but of man's nature. The Church, however, has too often overlooked this great truth, and set herself to destroy rather than regulate. She was led to this not by the teachings of her Divine Master, but by ascetic Eastern ideas, which in early times got mixed up with those teachings. Such ideas have always prevailed more or less in the East, and since the Church won its first triumphs in those regions, the ideas current there filtered into Christian thought, and became so mingled therewith

that the one could not be distinguished from the other. You cannot get the pure water of life if you stoop to drink of the river anywhere save at its fountain-head, in the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. Our Anglican and Roman friends are fond of pointing to the Church of the first three or four centuries. By that time the pollution had begun; the crystal stream of truth had been contaminated by foreign ideas. Priestly notions had sprung up, and as is always the case where they prevail, ascetic ideas had gained ground. And such ascetic ideas exhorted men not to the regulation, but the overthrow of certain faculties of their nature. And that conception has passed over in subtle forms from Catholic to Protestant Churches. In the former the object of attack was chiefly the body, and so fasting, penance, celibacy were enjoined. In the latter the objects of attack were of a different kind. The religious life was regarded as of so *serious* a kind that no place was left for the action of many of our faculties. Mirth, imagination, the histrionic power were all put under the ban.

To this day there are persons who regard wit or humour as being quite inconsistent with the Christian character. To laugh in a church is enough to put the preacher who causes the laugh, or the people who join in it, quite outside the company of the elect. I do not know what such persons would have said to St. Philip Neri, whose saintly character won for him the title of the Apostle of Rome, and whose room went by the agreeable nickname of the "Home of Christian Mirth." The saintly George Herbert used to sing and play his part at a weekly music meeting, and to justify this he would often say, "Religion does not banish mirth, but only moderates and sets rules to it," a saying which a good many religious people even in our day would do well to lay to heart, and

apply both to their own lives and even more in their judgment of others.

To many, the ideal Christian is a man half of whose faculties are kept in abeyance—whose life has no more flavour than the white of an egg. Now, that is not the New Testament idea of the matter. Its rule is regulation, not destruction—mastery, not overthrow. Is it likely that God would endow His creatures with faculties simply that they should occupy their time in destroying them? "Every creature of God is good, and is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer." The Divine plan for our life is *use*, not abuse. Numbers of people are kept out of the Church by the idea that they would have to leave half their nature outside, and they would rather stay outside themselves than leave half behind. I once urged a man to come into the fellowship of the Church, and he gave as a reason for refusing that he had such a hot temper. Is the Church, then, to be composed only of mild-eyed men, who have not got force of nature enough to be angry? If so, it will be a very mediocre company.

Yes, there is room for anger, provided it do not pass into sin. For anger is not only a faculty of human, but even of the Divine nature. Do we not read again and again of the anger of God? Are we not told that "the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and his anger was kindled greatly"?* Can we follow the course of Jesus Christ, and not perceive how again and again He grew angry at the hypocrisy of men? Do we not hear of the *wrath* of the Lamb—that is of the most tender, most patient, most loving of the sons of men?

And with such examples before us, must we not say that the nature incapable of anger is far from being a complete one? James the First once said, "I love not one

* 1 Sam. xi. 6.

that will never be angry, for as one who is without sorrow is without gladness, so he that is without anger is without love." The mother of Dr. James Hamilton (so says her son) "used often to be provoked with herself because she could not be angry." F. W. Robertson, when he heard of a base act, was so indignant that it rendered him sleepless. After a conversation on the wrongs of women, he said his blood was running liquid fire. His biographer says, "His wrath was terrible, and did not evaporate in words. It was Christlike indignation. Falsehood, hypocrisy, the sin of the strong against the weak, stirred him to the very depths of his being." Wordsworth thus describes and impersonates a spirit of righteous indignation :—

> "Pale was her hue; yet mortal cheek
> Ne'er kindled with a lovelier streak
> When aught had suffered wrong,
> When aught that breathes had felt a wound;
> Such look the oppressor might confound,
> However proud and strong."*

Speaking of his father's anger, Thomas Carlyle says, "It rather inspired him with new vehemence of insight and more piercing emphasis of wisdom."†

The absence of anger, indeed, may arise from an agnostic feeling that nothing can be known with certainty. I fear that spirit is rather prevalent just now, and is producing an indifferentism in politics as well as in religion. Many matters *are* beyond our knowledge, but there are others on which we ought to make up our minds, and for which we ought to be prepared, if needs be, to contend. In recoil from dogmatism we must not swing round to indifferentism, for that is the paralysis of life. There is not much hope of any man who does not say of some

* *Cf.* Jacox's "Secular Annotations on Scripture Texts."

† "Reminiscences," p. 13.

things, as Luther did, "Here I stand; I can do no other. So help me, God." For without such men, and the anger which naturally springs out of such a position, the world would have made but little progress. Anger, indeed, has been one of the factors in that progress. Without it the slave trade and a host of great iniquities would never have been brought to an end. It would be difficult to name a man of gentler spirit than John Greenleaf Whittier, to whom we owe some of the tenderest poems to be found in our English tongue; but his vehemence against the slave trade and against war is equally noteworthy, and his poems on these subjects quiver with a holy anger.

"It is vulgar to be angry on one's own account; we ought only to be angry for great causes." In certain cases, though not in that of the man who first said so, when asked, "Doest thou well to be angry?" we ought, we have a right to reply, "I do well to be angry."

But now let us see, if we can, the limitations of such anger. Two of these are hinted at in the text.

The first is, it must not pass into sin.

1. *To do this it must not pass into passion.* When this is the case it goes beyond our control. Passion becomes the master, and the man its slave. Then the horse gets the bit between its teeth and runs away with its rider, and a man overcome by passion is in a like helpless condition. We must keep a tight hold over anger, and not permit it to hold us. It is only uncontrolled anger which the Apostle bids us put away. We may say of anger, as of fire, it is a good servant, but a bad master. We must never let go our hold of the helm, or our bark may be dashed on the cruel rocks, and become a pitiable wreck. The moment anger passes into passion, so that unconsidered words pass our lips or vengeful feelings flash out of our eyes, it has ceased to be righteous,

and become sinful. Anger is not to be turned out of doors, but kept as a servant in the house.

2. *Then we must be quite sure that the object of our anger deserves it.* Examination should precede punishment; the judge should go before the executioner. The sword must not leap out of its scabbard till we have duly considered whether its work is necessary. Most of us need a keener sense of justice than we possess. Most of us need a little more patience in hearing evidence. Unlike Jesus Christ, we do not know by instinct what is in men, and we should, therefore, inquire and examine more carefully than we usually do. To judge by first appearances is often to judge unrighteously. We need to look at acts not in themselves, but in the light of the doers, in the light of their characters, their temptations, their proclivities. There is more virtue in some men's failures than in other men's successes. In some cases failure deserves our pity rather than our anger. After Peter's threefold denial, Christ only *looked* on him. It may be that John Henry Newman had that in mind when, as Vice-Principal of St. Mary's Hall at Oxford, an undergraduate guilty of some gross misconduct was brought before him for reproof. After the interview the culprit was asked, "What did he say to you?" "I don't know, but he looked at me." We need to keep the sword of anger sheathed until we are quite sure not only that the evil has been done, but guiltily done, and if it has been done against ourselves it is best to incline to the side of mercy. It has been well said, "Every man is a dispenser of justice; but there is one wrong that he is not bound to punish—that of which he himself is the victim. Such a wrong is to be healed, not avenged."

3. *Then, too, anger only falls short of sin when there is pity in it.* Anger at the evil, pity for the evil-doer. The true object of anger is the sin, not the sinner. It is very

difficult to make the distinction. Perhaps with us mortals it cannot be always made. It needs a very high nature to make it, but Christ made it. You remember that striking declaration, "And when He had looked round on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." That is the Apostle's description of His feeling. He must have seen the mingled anger and grief shining out of his Master's face. There is the ideal for us. That represents the Divine anger in relation to us sinners—anger at our sin, grief that our hearts are so hard as to make us sinners. We need such an ideal before us to keep our anger within proper limits, and preserve it from being vindictive and revengeful.

4. *Then, too, we need to remember our own frailty and folly.* Did we only stop to think, our anger would often be diverted from others, and thrown back on ourselves. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," said Christ. "And they went out one by one, beginning from the eldest: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman." Few stones would be cast did we wait to ask whether *we* are without sin, even of the particular kind at which we are disposed to be angry. "First pull out the beam that is in thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote which is in thy brother's eye."

The second limitation of the Apostle is, it must not become a settled mood of our hearts. This he graphically sets forth in the phrase, "Let not the sun go down on your wrath." Plutarch says that it was a custom of the Pythagoreans for those who had been engaged in a quarrel to kiss and make friends before the sun went down. Old Thomas Fuller quaintly urges this limitation of anger by the idea that the sinking sun might carry news to the Antipodes of man's revengeful nature; but he then goes on to remind

us that the words must not be taken literally, or our wrath would lengthen with the days, and men in Greenland, where the day lasts above a quarter of a year, would have plentiful scope for revenge. Still, much would be done if we never permitted anger to accompany us to bed, or be our companion through the night. What I take it the Apostle means is that anger should not become a settled mood or even a long-staying visitor in our life. Better, far better, the sharp, short lightning of the hot-tempered than the dull, settled mood of the sulky. I heard once of a husband who did not speak to his wife for three days, because one day at dinner she did not offer him a second helping of one of the dishes. Better, far better, a keen word for such omission than days and nights of sulkiness. Draw a limit around temper, or it will sour the spirit, and so sour the atmosphere of the home. Good Bishop Wilson says, "Temper is nine-tenths of Christianity." "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

Upon nothing does the joy of life so largely depend as upon temper, both to its possessor and those who dwell with him. I had rather live in a perpetual fog than with a sullen temper. But with most of us temper would bear improvement, especially in relation to those whom we love the most. What a strange thing it is that we keep our worst temper for our homes—that men, who are all sweetness and light out of doors, are often only sourness and darkness at home, where wife and children, like Luciana, often "starve for a merry look."* I suppose it is that in the home our real nature comes out, and in the world we put on an assumed nature, as we do our best clothes to go out in. But after all, where we love the most we should be best-tempered. But for this to be the case, we must become *really*, and not *seemingly* good-tempered, for in the

* *Comedy of Errors*, Act ii., sc. 1.

home our true nature will out. "Do you know Mr. So-and-so?" asked one friend of another, to which the significant reply was given, "How can I? I never lived with him." Ay, that is the test. What are we at home? That is somewhere near to what we are before God.

A few verses later the Apostle says, "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Only the anger consistent with that precept is without sin.

A LOVING MASTER.

"A certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him."—LUKE vii. 2.

THIS centurion, as he stands before us in the pages of the Gospel, strikes us as being an altogether lovable man. The harsher traits of the Roman character are conspicuous by their absence. He is conscious of the authority vested in Him by the Imperial power—he feels that he is a man under authority, with soldiers to obey his word; but it is clear that the authority is well nigh hidden by the atmosphere of affection which pervades his life and home. He so wields the power of Rome toward the conquered people among whom his lot is cast, that they are more conscious of the love he bears their nation than of his authority over them. He is more anxious to be their helper than their ruler. He finds more pleasure in rearing a synagogue for them than in displaying before them his military power. This is no man of "blood and iron," who believes that force is the only remedy; but one with a heart so tender that it reaches out even to the conquered people over whom he is set. When a soldier is good he is generally very good, very thorough, very downright in his goodness. Our own age has had illustrations of this in the case of men like Havelock, and Lawrence, and Gordon. This centurion is an early example of such a type. And his goodness, like all real goodness, shines out not only in relation to his equals or superiors in rank, but to those

in lower places. The same generous feeling which prompted him to build a synagogue for the Jews also prompted him to kindness and concern for this servant, or, as it should be rendered, this slave, of whom we are told that "he was dear unto him."

This is the more remarkable when we remember the kind of relationship which generally existed between Roman masters and their slaves. "It is in vain one looks for anything like common human feeling in the Roman slave-law of Republican times. The breaking up of slave families was entirely in the hands of the merchant or the owner; husband might be separated from wife, and mother from children, all dispersed and sold off into the houses of strangers and foreign towns. Slavery is equivalent to death in the eye of the civil law, which does not admit the existence of the slave, which entirely avoids and annuls the contract of a master with his slave, gives the slave no action at law against him. These were the dominant principles of the Roman slave law."* And the practice was in harmony with the law. "The slave in Rome was a chattel and a possession, had no individuality or 'caput;' whatever he earned belonged to his master, and he might be made a present of, lent, pawned, or exchanged. His union with a wife was no marriage, and was deprived of all its privileges and effects. A master might torture or kill his slave at will; there was no one to prevent him doing so, or to bring him to account, and the ordinary punishment of death was crucifixion. The elder Cato regarded slaves as 'souled instruments.' To him there was no difference between the beast and the slave, except that the slave, as a reasonable being, was held accountable. The punishment of death was inflicted

* Dollinger's "The Gentile and Jew in the Courts of the Temple of Christ," ii., p. 263.

for killing a plough-ox, but the murderer of a slave was called to no account whatever. For breaking a vase a slave had been thrown to feed the fish in the fish-pond. Augustus ordered his steward to be crucified on the mast of a ship for having roasted and eaten a quail of his that had been trained for the quail-pit, and had won many mains."* Such was the Roman feeling and practice in regard to slaves. And it renders the relationship between this centurion and his slave the more remarkable. For we are all affected by the moral atmosphere amid which our lot is cast. It affects us imperceptibly. To a large extent it determines our procedure. It is no merit in us that we do not treat our servants as the Romans did. Both law and custom forbid. But in the case of this centurion law and custom alike were in favour of treating slaves as mere chattels. Why did not this Roman thus treat this slave? The answer to that question is a two-fold one, and must be sought in the natures of both the master and the slave. Probably the master was humane, and the slave responsive to his kindness. Such a relationship as is here revealed presupposes both these conditions. If the master had been hard and unfeeling the slave's obedience and devotion would have gone for nothing. If these qualities had been wanting in the slave there would have been nothing to draw out any kindness in the master's heart. In these days great complaints are heard as to the lack of obedience and care in domestic servants. They are compared with those of former times to their disadvantage. It is taken for granted that all the faults lie with the servants. This is a huge assumption, and one that will not bear careful examination. If there be a lack of obedience and care on the part of servants, is there no lack of kindness and

* *Ibid.* ii., p. 259.

consideration on the part of masters and mistresses? If the servants of former days were less restless and less fond of change than those of our own time, does not the same remark hold good of masters and mistresses? In earlier times people settled down in a house, and did not leave it, save when they were obliged to do so, in many cases not till death called them away. But now three years is quite a respectable time to remain in one house. Servants like change of situation; mistresses like change of residence. A common restlessness lies at the root of both. If the relationship between mistresses and servants is not what it used to be, the fault cannot be laid at one, but at both doors. If mistresses say, "Ah! servants are not what they used to be," servants have quite as good right to say, and do say, "Ah! mistresses are not what they used to be." And if a higher relationship is to be established *both* must make up their minds to do better.

Now, the pulpit is the place from which truth, without fear or favour, should be spoken to all; and I affirm that, if we are to enter on a better time, both classes need to turn over a new leaf. The kindly relationship between this centurion and his servant was due not only to the kindness of the master, but to the responsive obedience of his slave; and those two factors are necessary to such a relationship now.

Now let us look at each in turn. *And first, at the master or mistress in relation to the servant.* In the case of this centurion it was a relationship of love. Marvellous that it should have been thus—that a Roman soldier should have loved his slave. And in such a relationship as that between master and servant there should be, in some form or other, in some degree or other, the same feeling. Christ bids us love our enemies. He would surely bid us love those who serve in our homes. I do not suppose

that, save in very exceptional cases, the feeling will be of the deepest. But I do maintain that the relationship is very far from being what it ought to be, until the servant is regarded as a part of the household, and within the circle of the gracious influences which should fill the home. The servant is not a mere machine, engaged to do so much work and receive so much pay in return, but one of like nature with ourselves—with the same capacities of joy and sorrow, of health and sickness, of hope and despair. The servant's position, moreover, like every other, has difficulties of its own. It is monotonous—the same round of work day after day. It is often lonely, because of the separation from relatives and friends. Like every other position in life, it has troubles of its own. But this is often forgotten, and service is looked for from our domestics without sufficient allowance for the fact that there are times in which it is difficult, almost impossible, for them to do their work as well as usual, because of weakness, or sickness, or the sense of loneliness, or on account of bad news from home, or mental unrest, or a multitude of things which might be mentioned. If we were to pause, and consider that servants are not machines, but living beings—that they are not merely hands, but beings with hearts, across which all the emotions of which we ourselves are conscious pass, we should, I fancy, sometimes be a little more careful as to how we reprove them. And such remembrance of the human nature of our servants would lead, as in the case of the centurion, not only to considerateness, but to concern and care in times of sickness. The anxiety of this Roman soldier for his little slave-boy leads him to look out for any means by which his sickness may be removed and death averted. All thought of his own dignity vanishes before his concern. And in such concern we ought not to be excelled

by a Roman soldier. Those who in health serve us have a claim on our sympathy and help when they are sick. I have known cases, however, in which, when sickness has fallen on a domestic, the one concern has been to get rid of her—to be free of responsibility on her account. Of course there are cases in which, to prevent the spread of disease, the sufferer should be removed to a hospital. In such cases this is a duty both to the servant and the family in which she serves—that the family may be freed from risk of disease, and the servant be better treated than she could be in a private house. But care and thought should not cease with removal; nay, removal should rather be the expression of such care, following the sufferer, and surrounding her with tokens of remembrance and sympathy.

Nor should care for our servants cease here, but extend to their moral and spiritual condition, especially in the case of very young ones. They are at the most critical stage of their life—exposed to special dangers and temptations. To such, mistresses should stand, as far as possible, *in loco parentis*. A Christian mistress should be as a mother, not only to her own children, but to those who serve in the home. It should be hers to protect from danger—to give wise and kindly advice, to endeavour to form character. If this were more generally done, a great part of what is called "rescue work" would be unnecessary. Prevention is better than cure; for even when cure is effected the scars of sin remain.*

Parents, too, should train their children in habits of respect to servants in the home—insisting on kindly

* "Mistresses might do very much to repress extravagance in their servants' dress, to waken habits of thrift and saving, to prevent too early and improvident marriages, which form one of the most prolific causes of poverty.

speech and the avoidance of the tone of command, preventing them, as far as possible, from giving needless trouble or causing useless work. This would not only be good for the servants, but would tend to prepare the new generation for the proper management of those who serve within the home. If we could make our homes what they ought to be the work of the Church would be half done, whilst they would furnish nobler illustrations of the truth of the Gospel than all other arguments. I know what will be said in reply to all this. I seem to hear mistresses saying, "Ah! you don't know what servants are, how perverse, how obstinate, how unmanageable, how ungrateful, how they set at nought all our efforts on their behalf!" Yes, *some* of them, but not all. There are servants *and* servants. But is it not so with every class? "He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone." Are there no bad masters, bad mistresses, bad doctors, bad ministers, bad tradesmen? And there are some servants who are incorrigible, who so disturb the peace of a household, who do so much mischief, that perhaps the lesser evil is to give them up. We may not have patience or time to effect the work of reformation. If, however, we *can* persevere, so much the better. But whether we do or not, let us not, in our concern for ourselves and for the comforts of our household, lose sight of the interests of those we cannot reform. And however bad the case may be, let us not, as some thoughtless mistresses have been known to do, thrust them from the house, late at night, and with no place to go to. From such treatment many have been led to begin a life of shame which has ended in their ruin. Let us treat such as we should wish a child of our own, were she in a similar position, to be treated. If we err, let us err on the side of mercy and care.

And now to turn to the other side of the question. *This centurion probably loved this slave because he had been faithful, because he had cared for his master's interests, because he had done his best.* To bid us love those who offer no returns of love is a counsel of perfection. It is well if we can do it, but it is a height to which very few attain. If, therefore, servants desire the care and regard of their employers they must do their best to deserve these. And in the great majority of cases they would find that conscientious service does not fail of its reward. If young women were to enter service resolving to be worthy of being regarded as part of the family, they would probably be treated as such. It should be their object to learn the wishes of their mistress, and comply with them, to throw their minds into their work—not to do it like a machine. They should seek the interests of their employers, avoiding all waste, jealous for the reputation of the household, careful not to gossip about the things which they may hear within the house, seeking to do as they would wish their servants to do if they were mistresses. And then it would not be long before they became a part of the household, and all thought of leaving or of their being dismissed would pass out of their minds. And so the sense of servitude would gradually diminish, and at last depart. It is the desire for change which ruins the present relationship between mistresses and servants. In the olden time servants entered a family with the idea of staying, and they did stay, and so became a part of the household. They were trusted by the parents and loved by the children. If they married they were not lost sight of or forgotten. They looked to their old place as to a kind of home to which they were always welcome, and where they would always find sympathy and help. Not long ago I called on a minister who had nearly reached

fourscore years, and whose sight was so impaired that he could no longer read. I said to him, "You have been a great student. How do you get on now that you are unable to see to read?" He replied, "My old housekeeper, about my own age, reads to me; she has already read the greater part of Neander's Church History; she gets on pretty well, save with Philosophy." What a delightful picture of master and servant going down the hill of life together, and helping each other on the way! It is an almost forgotten type of life. But it is worthy of remembrance, and, if possible, of revival. And it *might* be revived; and if it were, it would be fruitful of blessing to both households and domestics. But if it is ever to be revived both parties must strive for its revival. Mistresses must grow more considerate, sympathetic, friendly to their domestics, whilst servants must respond by conscientious service and deeper interest in the affairs of the household.

As we learn more and more of the real spirit, and teaching, and example, and self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ such a relationship *will* be revived. This will make us all, whatever our position may be, more worthy. This will make those who rule considerate and gracious in their rule. This will make those who serve to serve not as men-pleasers, but as the servants of God, doing His will from the heart. This will make us bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. This will transform all service into a common service to Him, for we shall feel that over both there is one Master, Christ, and all we are brethren.

MASK-WEARING.

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."—Acts x. 34.

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH tells us that we have lost the full force of this statement from the fact that "persons" does not mean for us now all that it once meant. "Person," from *persona*, the mask constantly worn by the actor of antiquity, is, by natural transfer, the part or *rôle* in the play which each sustains (as *πρόσωπον* is in Greek). In the great tragi-comedy of life each sustains a "person," one that of a king, another that of a hind; one must play Dives, and another Lazarus. This "person," God, for whom the question is not *what* "person" each sustains, but how he sustains it, does not regard.*

So that this passage does not point to a disregard by God of the man, but of the part he assumes in the play of life. Men do not judge of an actor by the social elevation of his part—for some of the most important parts are of poor and lowly people—but by the fidelity to life of his impersonation. And God does not respect the part, whether high or low, which falls to our lot, but He does respect the way in which we respond to its obligations and duties. Whatever our lot may be, whether high or low, rich or poor, if we fear God and work righteousness, we are accepted of Him. And this is the only true way

* "Synonyms of the New Testament."

of estimating men. We cannot choose our part or position in life; this is usually fixed by circumstances over which we have little or no control.

> "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends
> Rough hew them how we will."

But though choice of the part may be beyond our control, fidelity thereto is possible to us all. And on that the eye of God is fixed. "It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth us is the Lord," who alone has the full materials for judging, who alone knows our capacity, our opportunity, our ability; who alone sees the weakness or strength or the mingling of both we have inherited from our ancestors; who alone knows what we *can* and what we *cannot* do. From want of such knowledge even the wisest men make mistakes in their judgments of their fellows. You have all heard the story of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, who, when punishing a boy for failure, was met by the reply, "Please, sir, I have done my best, indeed I have," before which the great schoolmaster felt reproved and humbled. *We* see only the persons, the parts that are played; *God* sees the man, the woman, behind the parts. St. Francis of Assisi well says, "What every man is in the eyes of God, that he is, and no more." The application of that test makes mighty changes; it often makes the first last, and the last first. As Dante well says:—

> "How many are esteemed great kings up there
> Who here shall be like unto swine in mire,
> Leaving behind them horrible dispraises." *

And it is well for us sometimes to turn away from the estimates of men, who see only the "persons," the parts

* "Inferno," viii. 49-52.

we play, to think of the Divine estimate of our lives. We ourselves can, to some extent, know what this will be, since the play of motive in our hearts, hidden from the gaze of others, is open to ourselves. Every heart is known more or less perfectly to its possessor. And we do well to separate ourselves from the part we fill, and the estimate formed thereof by the spectators, so as to regard the real life which lies behind, and of which those around us know little or nothing. We are all, I fear, more or less hypocrites, seeming to be what we really are not. It may not be needful to expose all that is within, to the world—

> "To wear our heart upon our sleeve,
> For daws to peck at."

Life could hardly go on if we did. But we do well to pause and ask ourselves—not what is men's estimate, but what is the Divine estimate of our character and life. At all events, we should fix well in our minds that God is no respecter of "persons," of the parts we play on the stage of life, but only of the character which lies behind.

Now this principle touches life at all points. *Take, first of all, the business world.* Here the Divine and human estimate often differ. There is a proverb frequently on our lips, which in a worldly sense is true, and in a Divine sense as false as hell. I mean the proverb "Nothing succeeds like success," which means that men worship success, that they become votaries at its shrine, in most cases caring little how the success has been attained. Let a man make money enough to cut a figure in the world, to turn with a golden key the door to what are falsely called noble circles, and he is surrounded by a crowd of sycophants who care nothing for the spirit, the character, the methods which lie behind the "person," the part. How different is the estimate of God, whose

eye is on the man, and not the mask, on the spirit which has marked his career, and not its material results in land or gold. To the eye of the world he may be "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" to the eye of Heaven he may be "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And it is the duty of the Church to keep its eye, as far as it can, on the *man*, and not the *person*, the part he plays. But the Church has been infected with the spirit of the world, and thinks of the possessions, and not of the possessor. And the men who have only possessions are often disposed to claim an undue deference from the Church. This is markedly the case, it is said, in America. Not long ago a young and earnest minister supplied a pulpit for one Sunday in a thriving manufacturing town east of the Hudson. He was the guest of a deacon, and as they walked together, after the morning service, his host said, "Perhaps you were not aware that you preached to-day to eighteen millions of dollars?" "No," said the minister, "I was not; but they will go to perdition all the same unless they repent." A right noble answer, in which there was no fear of man, which bringeth a snare, but the utterance of a Divine estimate, which is regardless of "persons," and regardful only of life and character.

Take, secondly, the social world. It is said that in New York the question asked is, "What has he got?" in Philadelphia, "Who is he?" and in Boston, "What does he know?" The Philadelphia question only regards the person in the sense of his social status. There can be no merit there. A man cannot choose his ancestry. There is no virtue in being born of princely or ducal parentage. You cannot say, 'How very good of you to be the son of such parents.' That is a matter of the *person*, which God does not regard. Let the man rise to the responsibilities and opportunities of such a position; let him seize its

opportunities for doing good and communicating to others, as the Poet Laureate says of the late Prince Consort—

> "Not making his high place the lawless perch
> Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
> For pleasure ; but through all those years
> Wearing the white flower of a blameless life ; "

let him "fear God and work righteousness," and he will be accepted; but the mere person, the place into which he has been born, will not be regarded, save in the sense that where much is given much will be required. As the Latin proverb says, "Think on thyself, and not thy ancestry." Let us not mistake respectable surroundings for virtuous character. To the eye of man, virtue, it may be, looks more virtuous, and vice less vicious, in silk or broadcloth than in calico or fustian—in a mansion than in a hovel. And on the other hand, virtue may look less virtuous, and vice more vicious, amid poverty than amid wealth, as Shakespeare makes Lear say—

> "Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear :
> Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks ;
> Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it."*

But it is not so to the eye of God. Belgravian vice, though clad in fair colours, is just as vicious as Stepney vice, squalid and dirty though it be. Respectability is but a matter of the *person*, of appearance. Unless beneath it there be fear of God and the working of righteousness, it will not be regarded. Comely dress, decent habitation, a fair exterior will not take the place of righteousness. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" is the emphatic verdict of the Apostle whom Jesus loved.

Take, thirdly, the religious world. Since human nature

* "King Lear," act iv., sc. 6.

is everywhere the same, it is not to be wondered at that the errors of the world reappear in the Church, it may be in altered garb, but essentially the same in spirit. The tares are in the enclosure of the Church as well as in the field of the world. And this regard of persons is one of them. There, as in the world, men judge themselves, and sometimes are judged of others, by their profession rather than their practice, by what they appear rather than by what they are. And this in two ways.

1. *Men often regard themselves as religious because they attend church.* That *may be* the outward and visible sign of religion in the heart, but it *may be* only a matter of the "person," an acted part, not a sign of a living and outward reality. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," said Christ, who saw things as God does. The real question is, Does the life reach toward the part, the "person," indicated by attendance at church? Is it striving to fear God and keep His commandments, which the author of Ecclesiastes says is the whole duty of man? Is it striving to live more nearly as it prays? Do Sundays draw the life upward to truth, to charity, to righteousness? Then, and then only, is it accepted of God. I do not, you will observe, speak of actual attainment, but only of effort, of struggle, of aspiration. These may be attended with only a measure of success; but righteousness is a matter of *will*, not of *attainment*. The will *is* the deed. "If any man willeth to do the will," he is, in the Divine eyes, as though he actually did it—he is righteous. As Robert Browning says:—

> "'Tis not what man *does* that exalts him,
> But what man *would* do."

Can we honestly say that we are striving to be what we

pray to be, what we profess to be by our presence in the church ?

2. *Men often judge themselves by the creed they subscribe.* To them righteousness is only a matter of correctness of creed. Orthodoxy is put in the place of religion, right thinking for right willing. Now, a creed may be only a matter of the "person." Often it is not deliberately chosen, but inherited. Some people are born into a certain creed as they were into certain social surroundings. What a man's creed is is of *comparatively* little consequence, for it is only a matter of the person. What a man's relationship to that creed is, whether he is trying to live up to it or not, whether he is fearing God and working righteousness or not, is of infinite moment, and upon it his destiny will depend. I do not care to examine you as to your creed, but this I *do* ask you, and ask myself, Are we seeking to be true to it, trying to incarnate it in our life, turning the things we believe into epistles of the life, known and read of all men ? This is the heart of the whole matter. Are we doers, not sayers, living the truth, not merely repeating it with our lips ?

Well does Dante say—

> "But look thou, many crying are, Christ ! Christ !
> Who at the judgment shall be far less near
> To Him than some shall be who know not Christ.
> Such Christians shall the Ethiop condemn,
> When the two companies shall be divided,
> The one for ever rich, the other poor."*

That is but his rendering of the piercing words of Christ : "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

* "Paradiso," xix. 106-111.

THE HEALING SUN.

"The Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings."—MAL. iv. 2.

IN early times men viewed nature religiously rather than scientifically. The wise men of the East were at once priests and astrologers. Their survey of the heavens was rather by faith than by the reasoning faculty; but in spite of that, any approach in early times to science was made by prophet or priest. But science, in our sense of that term, was not yet. Still, in their religious survey of the heavens there were dim surmises of the great facts which science has in these latter days brought to light. That this is so is clear from the fact that men upon whom the light of modern science has shined can use the words of these old-world seers for the purpose of worship—it may be with a fulness of meaning of which they knew nothing. Take the words before us as an example of this. Malachi, who first uttered them, did not know the marvellous function discharged by the sun in relation to our world and to the universe at large. He probably thought of the sun as really rising and setting. He had no idea that his apparent movement was due to that of the earth. But yet the prophet dimly discerned that the life of the world —the healing, as he calls it—was due to the great orb of day. And so when he would tell of the healing, life-giving influence that would be exerted by the fuller and clearer manifestation of God, of which he was the last

herald, he describes it as the arising of the Sun of Righteousness. It is quite clear, therefore, that he must have had a larger conception than we sometimes fancy of the unique and wonderful function of the sun in the great system of the Universe. That this was so is supported by the fact that to the neighbouring nation of Persia the sun was the chief object of worship. Thus, in early times, men dimly surmised what science in later days has clearly apprehended and revealed. That this is so is confirmed by the fact that *we* can take our modern knowledge, and read it, without any sense of incongruity, into these old words.

In considering this passage I am not careful to confine myself to the ideas that were in the prophet's mind when he uttered it, but only that all I may say shall be congruous to the thought which gave them birth.

First, then, he saw clearly that the earth was dependent on the sun. However he may have conceived of the sun, whether as a great ball of fire a few feet in diameter, or as a world as big or bigger than the earth on which he trod, we do not know; but he must have seen that the sun was not a part of the earth, but something quite distinct from it. And therefore, since healing came from the beams of the sun, the earth could not do without something which was above and beyond itself. *That* he must have seen. He did not know, as we do, *how much* earth owes to the sun; but he did see, he must have seen, that the earth could not suffice for itself, but that it needed influences from a source outside itself to live and flourish—a fact we all know. The *life* of the world—of plant, of animal, of man—the *beauty* of the world—of flower and tree, of creeping thing and flying fowl, of man, the lord of all—are due to the sun. And with that idea rooted in his mind, he passes on to a higher idea—that the great spiritual world needs, and must have, a sun of its own,

a Sun of Righteousness; that the world of humanity cannot live or flourish by itself, that it is dependent on something outside and beyond itself. Each world must have its sun—the visible world a sun of heat and light, the invisible world a Sun of Righteousness. The necessity is as great in the one case as the other. Nature cannot live without the sun whose beams warm and light her domain. And man cannot live, really live, without the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Man's nature cannot be self-sufficient, or self-nourished, or self-renewed. God is as vital a necessity to his spirit as the sun is to the body in which that spirit dwells. And he knows this to be the case. Everywhere men have looked to something beyond themselves for the light and heat which their spirits craved. A few years ago we used to be told that races had been found without any trace of religious worship. That mistake arose from ignorance of their language and thought. Fuller knowledge has proved, beyond any reasonable doubt, that every race of which we have any acquaintance has a worship of some kind—that everywhere men look beyond themselves, beyond their own nature, for sources of inspiration, of comfort, of hope. M. de Quatefrages, the author of "The Human Species," says, "Obliged in my course of investigation to review all human races, I have sought atheism in the lowest as well as the highest. I have nowhere met with it, except in individuals, or in more or less limited schools, such as those which existed in Europe in the last century or which may still be seen in the present day."

Such individual exceptions may be regarded as proving the rule, or, as I should be disposed to affirm, they are not real, but only seeming exceptions; since even those who call themselves "Atheists" have yet a dim but ineradicable consciousness, in the realm of their moral

sense, that there is "One with whom they have to do," from whom they cannot escape, such a feeling as the Psalmist's words express: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"

You know the old dictum, that what has been believed everywhere, by all, and in all times is Catholic doctrine. We may extend that saying beyond the bounds of Christianity and the Church, and say that what man has felt everywhere and at all times expresses a radical, ineradicable need of his nature. It is of the very essence of man to look up, to look beyond himself. There is that in his nature which forces him, in some mode or other, to worship. I sometimes hear men talk of the overthrow of religion. They might as well talk of blotting the sun out of the heavens. They talk as if science would sooner or later overthrow faith. They might as well talk of science putting an end to the sun. It may give us new knowledge about the sun, and show us how dependent we are on his beams. And that is probably what science will in the end do in relation to the Sun of Righteousness. It will show us the marvellousness of the universe, and so teach us to cry with a deeper feeling, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches." Science may alter the form of our faith and worship, may help to make it more intelligent and reasonable, may clear away some of the accretions of ages; but unless man become other than he is, unless his nature be radically altered—and of that there are no signs—he will still need and crave a "Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings."

Why does man need such a Sun of Righteousness? For exactly the same reasons that he needs the visible sun; that is, the same reasons in a spiritual sense. What does the sun do for us physically?

First of all, it draws plant and tree upward. It overcomes another force—that of gravitation, which tends to draw downwards to the earth. Plants are under two influences—gravitation, which draws their roots into the soil; sunlight, which draws their branches and leaves and flowers upward to the heavens. Intangible as it is, the sunlight is a mighty force. Plant a shrub in the earth, and put a heavy stone upon it, and the sunlight will so attract that the plant will either lift the stone or creep out from beneath it, and lift its head to the light.

"A little flower so lowly grew,
So lonely was it left,
That heaven looked like an eye of blue
Down in its rocky cleft.

"What could the little flower do,
In such a darksome place,
But try to reach that eye of blue,
And climb to kiss heaven's face?

"And there's no life so lone and low,
But strength may still be given,
From narrowest lot on earth to grow
The straighter up to heaven." *

And that is the function of the Sun of Righteousness, to contend with the forces around us which would hold us down to the earthly, the visible, the temporal, and draw us upward to the invisible, the eternal. It wrestles with the influences which would shut in our life to the lower world, which would make us walk by sight, which would make us mere traders, or artisans, or pursuers of our worldly calling, and lifts us up so as to be the "sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." That is a great function, and indispensable to a really blessed life. What pitiable objects we should become if we resolutely, day after day,

* Gerald Massey.

walked with our faces to the earth! How bent and deformed we should be! And that is but a visible token of the effects wrought in the spirits of men who will not respond to the influences of the Sun of Righteousness, who grow immersed in the things beneath them—things less than themselves, and will not lift their eyes and their hearts to the things above them—things greater than themselves. In one of the services of the English Church the priest bids the people, "Lift up your hearts," and they respond, "We lift them up unto the Lord." Without such lifting of the heart life becomes dwarfed and stunted. What folly it is to be ever bending to the things beneath us, when we might lift up ourselves to the things above, the things invisible and eternal. When the ancient king asked the cynic what he could do for him, he replied that all he wanted was that the king should get out of the light. And the true philosophy for our life is to put out of the way all that hinders the beams of the Sun of Righteousness from falling on our path.

Then, secondly, the sun is the great beautifying influence. Science has shown us that the lovely colours of bird and beast, of plant and flower, are due to the beams of the sun. Those beams are made up, as we all know, of the seven colours of the spectrum. The rainbow is but sunlight broken up into the colours of which it is composed. It is said that the paleness of spring flowers is due to the fact that in the sunlight of that season the paler colours of the spectrum are then the more powerful, whilst the darker colours of the flowers of summer and autumn are due to the greater force of such colours in the spectrum at those seasons. The sun is the great artist, the great beautifier of the world. Nor is it otherwise, in a spiritual sense, with the Sun of Righteousness. To it are due what the Apostle calls the "beauty of holiness." Life never

reaches its greatest beauty apart from religion. It has been the great quickener of beauty in art, in poetry, in music. Music and painting scarcely began to be till Christ's influence had told on the world. Even ancient art, restricted as its sphere seems to have been, was the child of religion. So that it has had much to do with material beauty. But its great work is in making man spiritually beautiful—in softening down the rough angles of his nature, and rounding it to a true completeness.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was taken by a friend to see a picture. He was anxious to admire it, and looked it over with a keen and careful but favourable eye. "Capital composition; correct drawing; the colour, tone, chiaroscuro excellent; but, but, it wants, it wants—*that!*" snapping his fingers; and wanting "*that,*" though it had everything else, it was worth nothing.* And do we not look upon many a life and say, "Yes, there is much to admire, but something is lacking, that which would round the whole to lines of beauty—'the grace of God that bringeth salvation'?" Screen a plant from the sunlight, and it will probably retain its form, but the stem and leaves, instead of being rich in colour, will be blanched to a painful whiteness. And let a human life be screened from the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and the fair colours which would have made it beautiful will be sought in vain. Let us not deprive our souls of that better part which will render them really beautiful, and which shall not be taken from us.

And then, thirdly, the prophet tells of the healing of the sun. That is true both of plant and animal. Shut off from the sunlight, plants grow unhealthy; they become the prey of fungus and disease. Nor is it otherwise with animal life. Man and beast alike, deprived of sunlight,

* "Horæ Subsecivæ," i. 172.

grow pale and limp. "All the vital functions rise and set with the sun." * There is an establishment on the Continent where sunlight is the only remedy used to cure disease; all day long the patients bask in the sun. The sun is the great healer directly by his beams, and indirectly by the medicinal plants nourished by his rays. And this is essentially the function of the Sun of Righteousness—to "heal the hurt of the daughter of My people." When the doctor is asked by Macbeth—

> "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?"

he replies—

> "Therein the patient
> Must minister to himself."

There Shakespeare was wrong, or only partly right; that is beyond the patient's power. In such a case the patient *cannot* minister to himself; but it is not beyond the skill of Him whom the prophet in distant vision beheld as the Sun of Righteousness. This is the very work of Jesus Christ. For such He specially came. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." His cry was, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Every heart has need of such healing. Every one of us has sins which burden or trouble us, anxieties too keen to be removed by human help, forebodings known only to ourselves. We need the life-giving touch of the Son of God. Let us open our hearts to the healing beams of that great Sun of Righteousness, and gradually, but surely, we shall be made whole.

* "*Sol illuminatio nostra est; Sol salus nostra; Sol sapientia nostra.*"

"Just as a mother, with sweet, pious face,
Yearns towards her little children from her seat,
Gives one a kiss, another an embrace,
Takes this upon her knees, that on her feet;
And while from actions, looks, complaints, pretences,
She learns their feelings, and their various will,
To this a look, to that a word dispenses,
And, whether stern or smiling, loves them still;—
So Providence for us, high, infinite,
Makes our necessities its watchful task,
Hearkens to all our prayers, helps all our wants,
And even if it denies what seems our right,
Either denies because 'twould have us ask,
Or seems but to deny, or in denying grants."

"*Vincenzo da Filicaja*," *translated by Leigh Hunt.*